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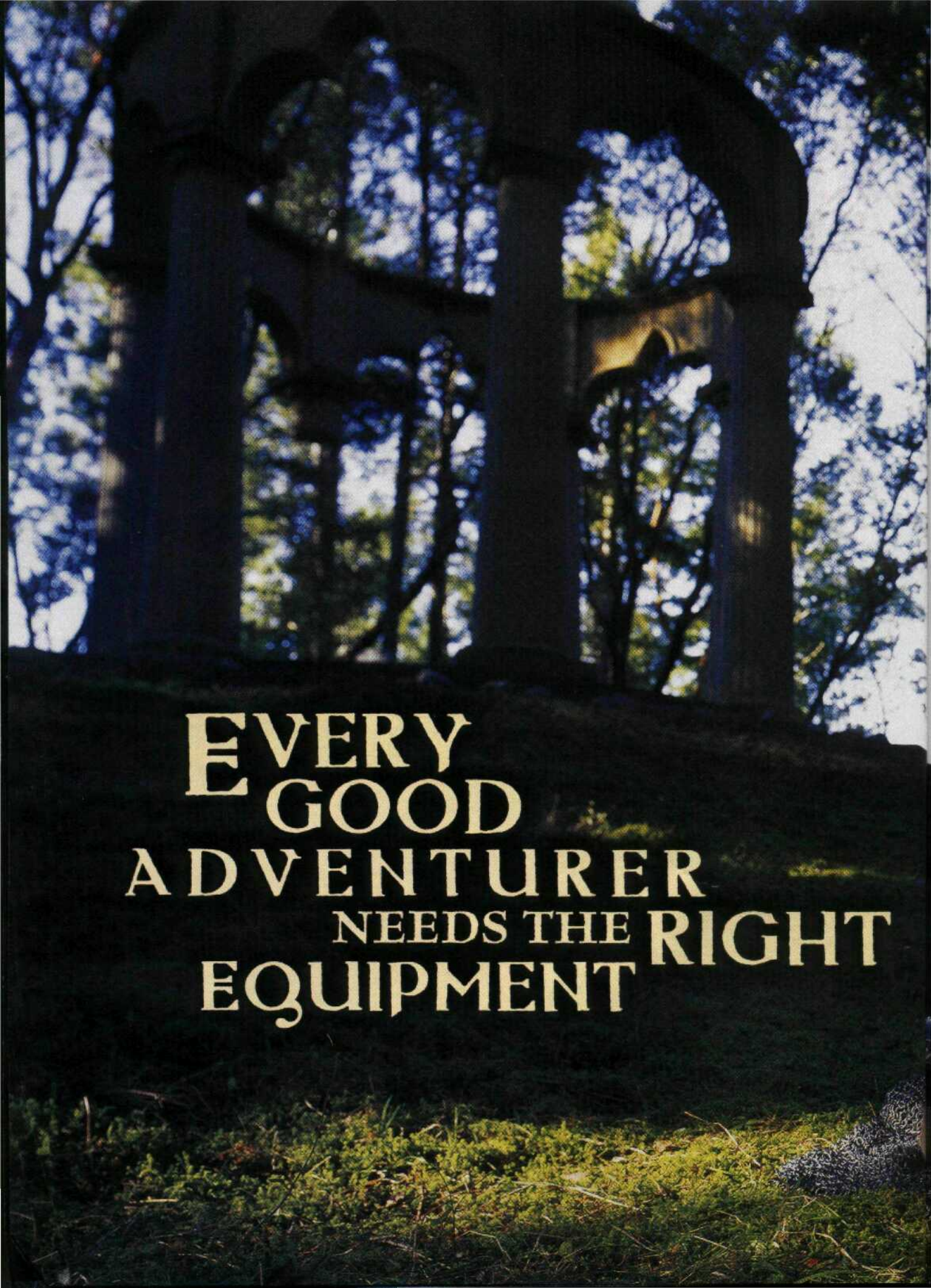
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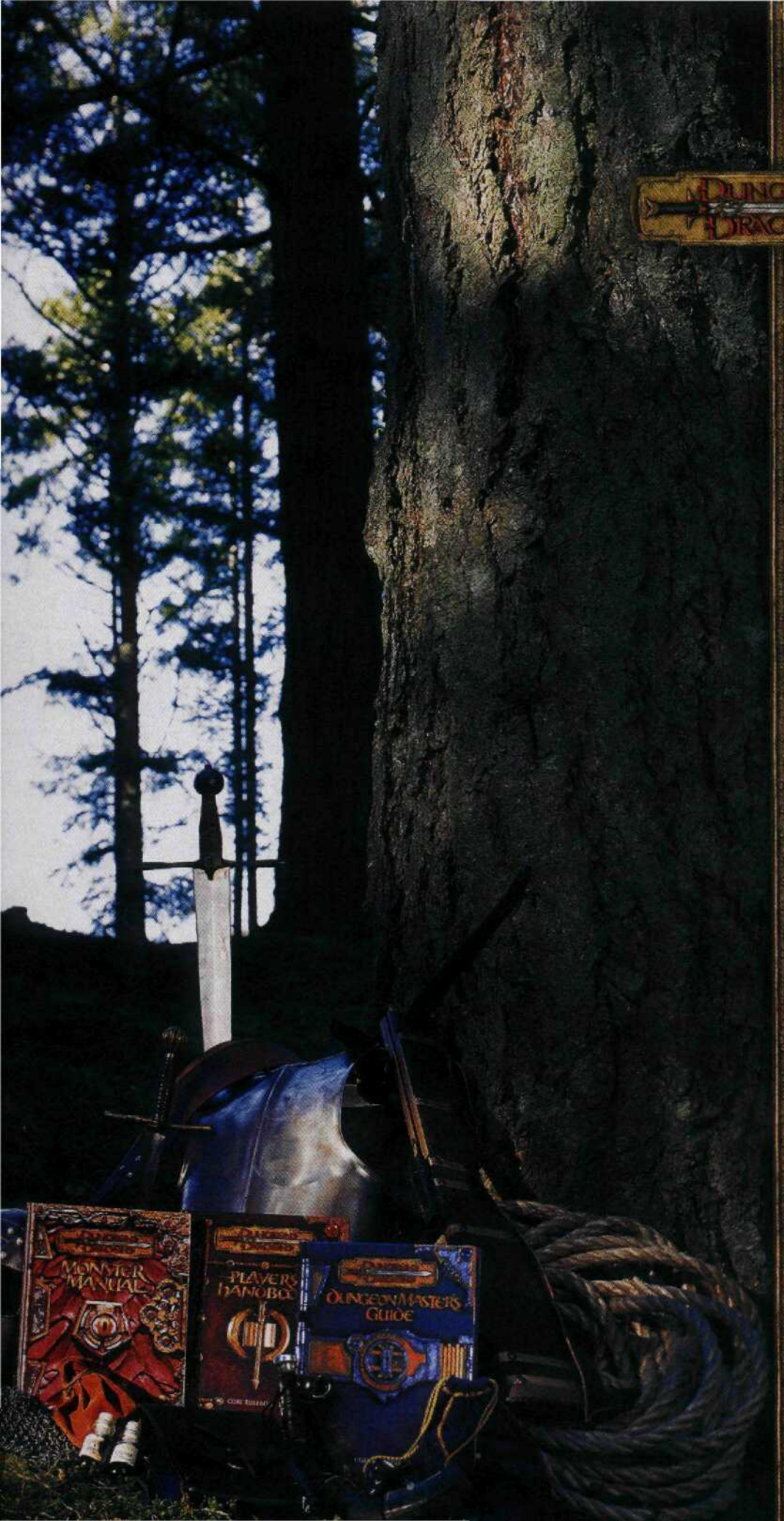

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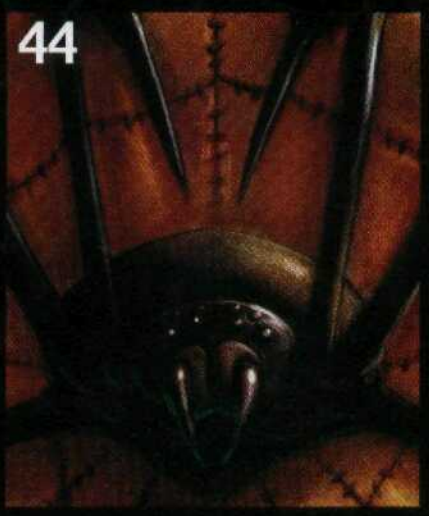

ON THE COVER

Marc Sasso proves that D&D is all about leather-clad drow jumping off of an exploding bridge. The full-page reproduction of the cover is on page 24.

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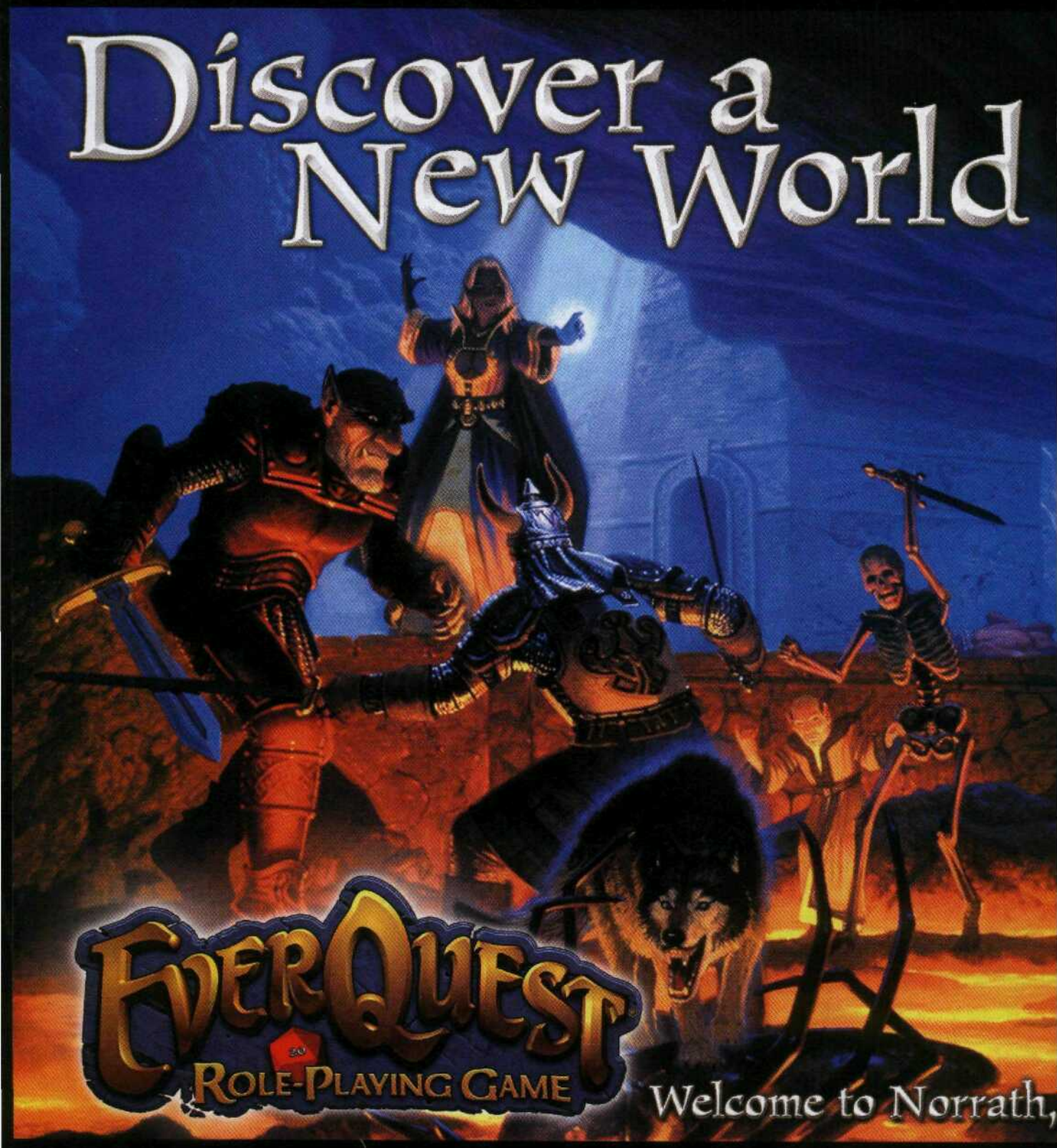

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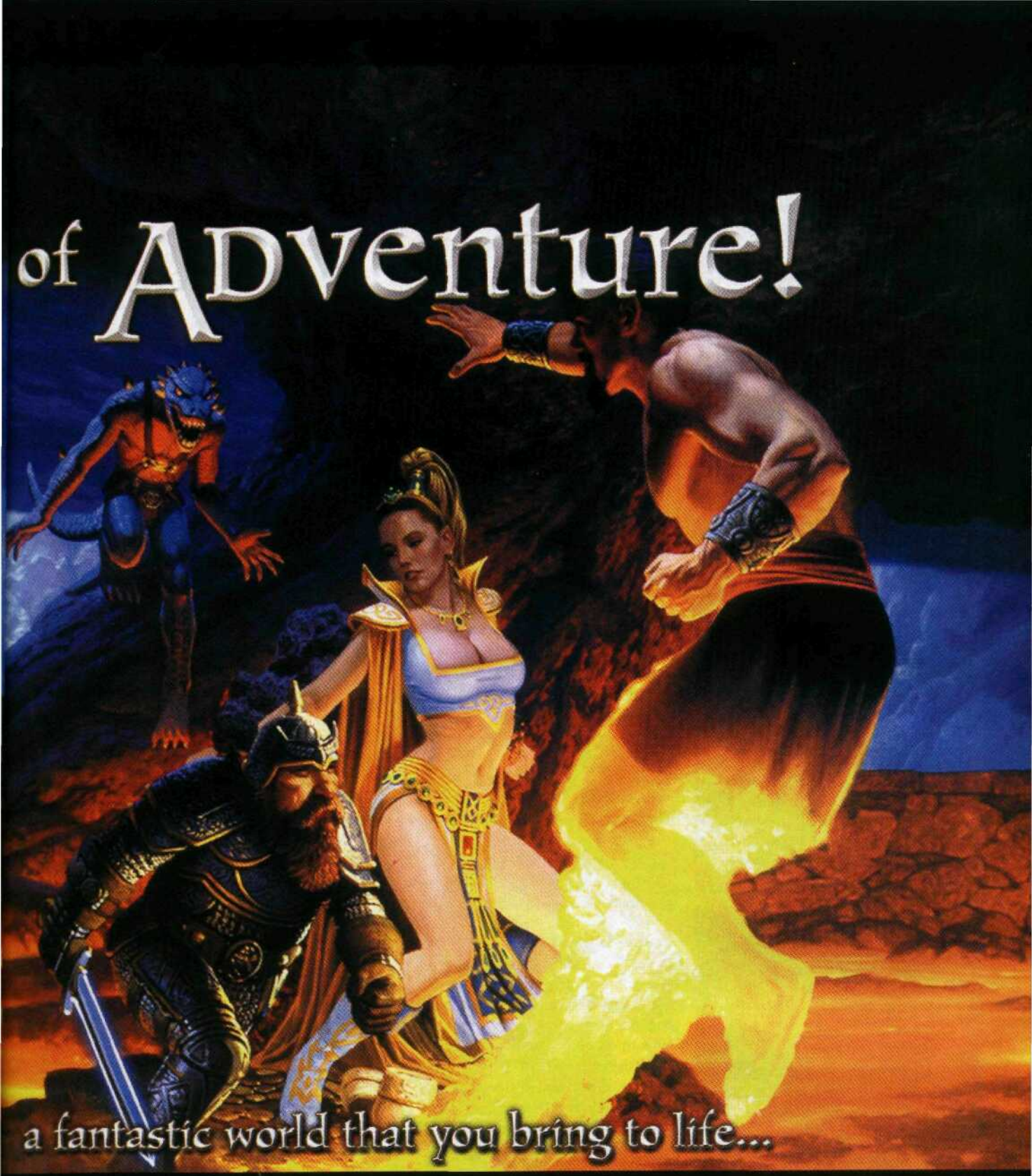

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SWORD & SORCERY

Demon Elves?

"What do you mean, 'demon elf?' aren't we fighting drow?" So the session began. Our group, exploring the fringes of the ancient city Chael-Rekshaar after the successful retrieval of one of the ancient turibles of Te-Altus, had finally managed to track the spider creatures we knew to be in the area.

Once in the small cavern complex, we met the first of a series of ambushes, and each time we were attacked, it became more and more apparent that the creatures we were fighting were some horrible blend of elf, demon, and spider.

We were in the Underdark, mind you, so I had expected drow. The standard, ECL +2, cast-*daylight*-before-you-start-beating-on-them drow. What the other players and I found was a lot more complex than that and a more integral part of the campaign.

It might not seem like much of a variation to go from dark-skinned drow to pale-skinned, spider-eyed demon elves, but our DM, game designer Andy Collins, wanted the race of Underdark-dwelling elves in his campaign to stand apart from drow yet blended seemlessly with the history of the campaign world. As we played through the adventure, seeing more and more monstrous spiders, choldriths, fiendish spiders, elves with grafted spider legs, elves with spider eyes, shape-shifting elves quick to turn into spiders, and others, it never felt like we were fighting drow. These waves of attackers were, in game terms, identical to drow, with templates applied when appropriate. Fiendish elves, were-spiders, and fiendish were-spiders who worship an ancient demoness named Lolth sound a lot like drow, but by presenting them in a different way, they found a place in the game world that drow never could.

Drow aren't the only element of D&D that begs for creative uses in different campaigns. Our For Your Campaign and For Your Character sidebars in recent issues show how some ideas can be adapted, but they're at best the tip of the iceberg. Join in the discussion of how the ideas from *Dragon* and *Dungeon* can fit your game on the message boards at **www.wizards.com.**

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

READERS TALK BACK
SCALEMAIL

Standing Alone?

Simply put, Issue #296 kicked arse! Starting with the wonderful cover art of Sam Wood's dragon slayer, I knew I was in for a treat. The four prestige classes presented in "Dragon Hunters" were very cool and can easily be adapted to fit into any game. "Worshipers of the Forbidden" was very interesting and creepy. The picture of the screaming face at the top of the article really set the tone for it. Such a dark image of insanity and danger . . .

The real reason I'm writing, however, is Thomas Harlan's story, "The Tomb." I enjoyed the story of Harold Godwinson and his journey in the Holy Land during the Crusades. I think it's a wonderful idea and presented very well. I like the conflict of religion and nationalism presented in his stories. Is "The Tomb" part of a book series? If so, I'd be very interested in getting the books.

Ben Dowell
Mattoon, IL

Thomas Harlan's historical fantasy stories from issue #296 and #284 share the same world as his novel series, but not the same characters. If you like the short stories, you're sure to enjoy the novels as well.

Short Sighted

When I read the initial flavor text for the vengeance sworn prestige class (in *Dragon* #296), the dragon hunters who had lost a loved one or even their own lives to dragons, I was impressed: "Born from the aftermath of dragon-wrought tragedy, death, and destruction, the vengeance sworn focus their hatred of dragons and their desire for revenge into a divinely sealed oath that drives them beyond the limits of mortal endurance." However, the flavor text also notes that rogues, monks, wizards, sorcerers, and other arcane spellcasters rarely become vengeance sworn, and the requirements all but assure that they don't. I don't understand why a wizard whose family was slain by a dragon would be any less vengeful than a barbarian or ranger whose family was slain by a dragon. In this case, the mechanics of the class run counter to the roleplaying elements inherent in the class.

To qualify to become a vengeance sworn, a character must have lost a loved one to a dragon or been killed by a dragon. That's great! Such a requirement makes sense. However, the other requirements are onerous and illogical. True, if one plans to be a vengeance sworn, the path is simple: Assign a 13 to Intelligence, take one barbarian level, six ranger levels, buy the appropriate skills, take the appropriate feats, and make sure to get killed by a dragon (or make sure that Uncle Ben is killed by a dragon). How many people, however, plan to be vengeance sworn? Why must vengeance sworn have Expertise, the only fighting feat not usable in a rage? The Expertise requirement also forces the vengeance sworn to be smart (Int 13). Since when do revenge and a pact with a deity require brains? The Ambidexterity and Two-Weapon Fighting requirements force a vengeance sworn without a ranger level to have a Dexterity of 15. Why are Dexterity and Two-Weapon Fighting so important? If a ranger ability had to be chosen, why not favored enemy: dragons? That requirement makes roleplaying sense, at least. Even the base attack bonus requirement of +6 is a bit high. It makes sense if the vengeance sworn are pure warriors, but many who would swear vengeance against dragons have other strengths.

What is most galling about the design of the vengeance sworn is that nothing about the concept calls out strictly to barbarian/ranger/druids more than fighters, wizards, rogues, or any other class. Compared to another memorable vengeance-based prestige class, such as the fiend slayer from *Dragon* #287, the vengeance sworn comes up short.

Phill Calle
Tamarac, FL

The vengeance sworn prestige class isn't positing that only particular classes can feel vengeful toward dragons, as your

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OKAY, I THINK I DISABLED THE FIREBALL TRAP ON THE CHEST. I'M NOT 100% POSITIVE, THOUGH.
DINDIL AND I WILL GO STAND OUTSIDE THE ROOM— OUT OF BLAST RANGE—THEN YOU OPEN IT.
ME?! WHY ME?!
BECAUSE YOU ARE THE ONE WHO DID NOT DO A GOOD-ENOUGH JOB ON THE TRAP— OTHERWISE YOU WOULD BE 100% POSITIVE! OPENING THE CHEST IS YOUR PUNISHMENT!
MY PUNISH-MENT?!
YES! PUNISH-MENT!
YEH!

letter implies. However, like most prestige classes, this one was designed with a particular character type in mind. In this case, the prestige class is intended for melee-minded characters who also have the ability to cast divine spells. The description of the vengeance sworn makes it clear that these characters are relentless, driven, battle-hardened, and comfortable in harsh environments. The barbarian, ranger, fighter, and druid classes fit these aspects to some point, and certainly even more so when combined into a multiclass character.

Remember that your DM has the final say on any game aspect. If you'd like to change the focus of the vengeance sworn or some of the requirements, ask your DM.

The Legacy Lives On

I'm writing in response to the deluge of art-related complaints you seem to receive each month, particularly in regards to the cover art from the April issue (#294). I can't understand how any male who is secure in his masculinity could be put off by the artwork on the April cover. Sure, it depicts a scantily clad male with incredibly buff features, but hasn't anyone out there ever watched movies like *Conan the Barbarian*? Barely clothed, hulking males are as much a part of the genre's legacy as gorgeous women in skimpy chainmail bikinis. Besides, it's just cover art; buying the issue in no way suggests anything about your masculinity.

Personally, I have loved the cover art (and interior art) of each issue of *Dragon*, which I have purchased since the new edition came out. It is vibrant, alive, and a welcome change from the old, "medieval" style, which, though time-honored and proven, can get a little stale after twenty-odd years. Keep up the fantastic work, folks!

Tristan Kasper
Rochester, NY

Take a Growth Pill

I've been a reader of *Dragon Magazine* for almost twenty years, and until now, I've never written in to express my opinion. This time I had to. I just picked up the June issue of *Dragon* (#296) and started skimming through it. I only made it to page twelve before I was so appalled by the content of "Scale Mail" that I had to respond. The extreme immaturity evident in some of the letters was very disturbing to me, especially because they relate to a game that I always thought appealed to a better class of person than that.

One particular letter relates an overheard conversation wherein a male gamer couldn't buy the April issue because it has a bare-chested man on the cover. I actually had to go back and dig out my copy of that issue to take a second look at this supposedly awful display, because I couldn't remember noticing a problem with it. When I looked again I saw why I couldn't remember anything. There was no problem. I thought it was a fine piece of artwork. Better than some covers, not as good as a few others I've seen. I can't understand why anyone would have a problem with this cover. I find it sad that some people could be so insecure that they would not buy a magazine over such an inoffensive piece of art. I hope no one ever makes them read a *Conan the Barbarian* comic—they might be traumatized for life.

I also found the tone of that letter disturbing. The idea that this cover was somehow retribution on male gamers for the scantily clad women portrayed in the industry over the years was petty. So we get to see what it feels like for the females? I'm a male gamer, and I wasn't bothered in the least by that cover, so why are they bothered by others?

Another letter in "Scale Mail" asks that only female flesh be shown on the covers out of respect for the tender sensibilities of the male majority. I'm not even sure how to address this one. The only response I can think of is: Grow up!

What it all comes down to, or *should* come down to, is that art is art. If it's done well, looks good, and isn't pornographic, then it shouldn't be a problem.

Calvin Camp
New Berlin, NY

We could go on and on with gobs of letters we received in support of the covers from issues #293 and #296, but we think you get the idea.

Seeking Fiction?

I have a question regarding the fiction you include in your magazine. Is it possible to send you some of my stories?

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KNIGHTS AND PALADINS!

Campaign Components: Knights
by John Tresca

This issue of *Dragon* presents the first of a new concept for articles about D&D. New campaign settings are great, but often it's hard to adapt that material for a game already in progress. "Campaign Components" articles take the best parts of a campaign idea and give you the tools you need to add a specific theme to your home campaign or use them to build a new world.

The first installment? Knights!

Jousting tournaments, knightly orders, honor, chivalry, quests, crusades, and courtly intrigue: It's all explained and presented so you can lift it or leave it. Play a gnome peasant, a dwarven squire, a halfling knight, or a half-orc king. Inside, you'll also find new uses for skills, d20 jousting and tournament rules, magic items, and adventure seeds so you can add knights to any game.

Think it's not D&D without mind flayers and mages? Don't worry: We'll show you how to bring chivalry to the dungeons and dragons to the tilting grounds.

ARCANE LORE: Sacred Spells
by Amber E. Scott

Pump up your paladins with new spells of truly righteous might.

CLASS ACTS: Oath and Order
by Bruce R. Cordell

Two deadly monk prestige classes show the power of an ordered mind.

BAZAAR OF THE BIZARRE: The Wizard's Toy Box
by Christopher Coyle

See what terror and joy the toys of wizards can bring.

THE PLAY'S THE THING: Feats of Personality
by Eric Cagle

Does having the Run feat make you a coward? See how your feats can affect your personality.

Inside you'll also find new fiction, "DM's Toolbox," "Silicon Sorcery: *Warcraft III*," "Guild Secrets," "Living Greyhawk," and more advice, tools, and tactics to improve your game!

[SCALE MAIL]

Heitor Lisbôa Altemani
Campinas, São Paulo, Brazil

While we used to accept fiction submissions from our readers and other unsolicited writers, we have recently changed our policy. Due to time constraints, the enormous volume of stories received, and our small staff, we are now only accepting fiction submissions from solicted authors. We know that this is bound to disappoint the small portion of our readership who saw the magazine as their gateway to publishing fiction, but we're a gateway into the gaming industry, and we want fans to focus solely on contributing game-related articles now.

We are making the finishing touches to the new submission guidelines. You'll find the guidelines on the new website ***www.paizopublishing.com*** *very soon.*

A New Model?

I am writing to ask that you bring back the "Role Models" column. I greatly enjoy this column, and I believe that its job is not yet finished. One direction to consider is scenery, structures, and other terrain. Zvezda of Russia and Domus of Spain both make kits for medieval structures that are roughly the right scale for the D&D miniatures. The "Role Models" column could also explore scratchbuilding, like the superb articles in *Star Wars™ Gamer*. [Ed: scratchbuilding is the building of terrain models using scrap and common household items.]

Brian Willard
Redding, CA

"Role Models" was a great column, but ultimately the Web seemed a better place for Mike May's great instruction because new readers could then find step-by-step instructions in one easily cataloged place. You can find Mike's instructions in his "Paint Like a Pro" series on ***www.wizards.com/dnd.***

Mistaken Identity

The letter entitled, "No Mindreading" in issue #296 was incorrectly credited to James Gadbois of Portland, Maine. The correct author is Campbell Rhodes, of Richardson, Canberra, Australia. Apparently, we should have titled the letter, "We Are Mindless," for the obvious brain fart. Our apologies to the "Rev" Gadbois and Mr. Rhodes. D

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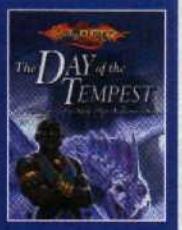

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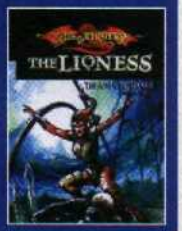

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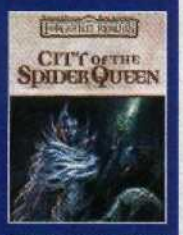

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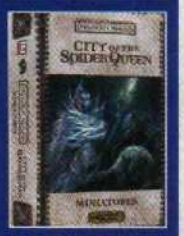

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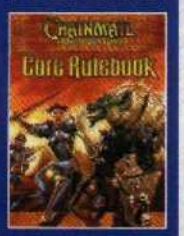

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[AT THE TABLE]

THE CAVE OF PAIN BATTLEMAT

AND CHAINMAIL COLLECTOR'S POSTER

This month's free poster has two very different applications, side one is obviously a collector's checklist for the CHAINMAIL miniatures, and the other side is a battlemat suitable for either D&D or CHAINMAIL battles. The dots on the map deliniate the 1" squares necessary to play D&D, but they are not as obtrusive as a standard grid, allowing CHAINMAIL players a great battlefield.

D&D Gameplay Notes

The following notes help you run D&D combats in the Cave of Pain. In all cases feel free to use or ignore whatever you'd like. The cavern and its spider theme are ripe for adventure and encounter ideas, so give your imagination free reign. Here are a few ideas:

A: The spider on the floor emits a faint but potent magical aura that makes wounds more dangerous than normal. Any wound dealt by a slashing weapon continues to deal one point of damage per round, as if dealt by a weapon with the wounding property.

B: The webs between the pillars can simply represent cobwebs, or they could be more significant obstacles, perhaps they are fireproof, spun by fiendish spiders, or perhaps they hide wires that set off traps (Search DC 25).

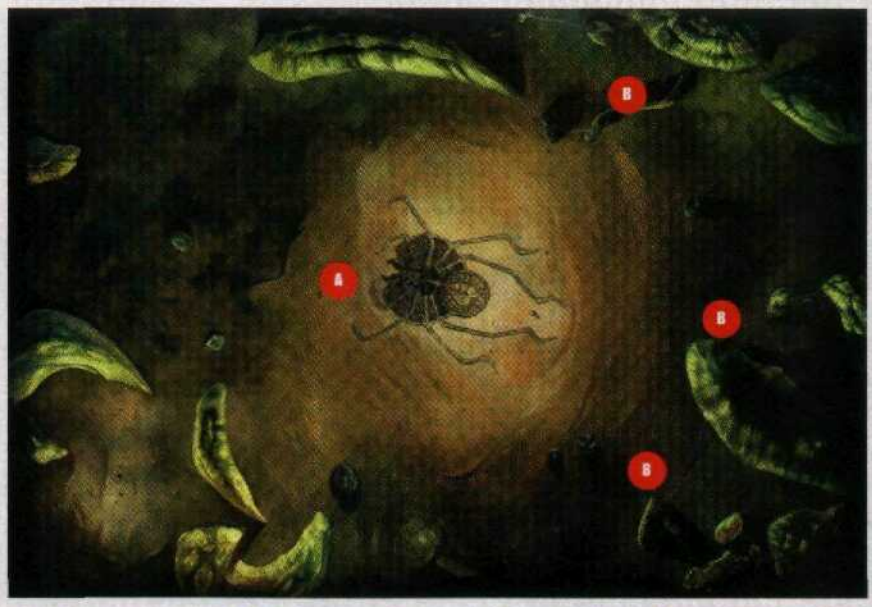
Chainmail Gameplay Notes

The Cave of Pain is a scenario in the set 4 guidebook, *Shadow of the Drow*. Every time a model suffers damage in the cave, it takes an additional point of automatic damage. You can use this cavern as the Cave of Pain or use it for other underground scenarios. The locations for Blood Harvest's divine sparks are marked on the cavern floor.

A: Ordinarily, the spider glyph at the center of the cavern has no effect on play, and terrain can even be placed on it if you are putting more terrain into the cave. But if you wish, you could let the spider glyph function like some special terrain piece, having the same effect as a sacred circle or murder tile, for example.

B: Before each battle, decide whether you want to ignore the web strands in the cavern or treat them like small pieces of Web terrain as described in *Shadow of the Drow*.

Note that there are spaces that models with 40mm bases will only be able to pass through by squeezing.



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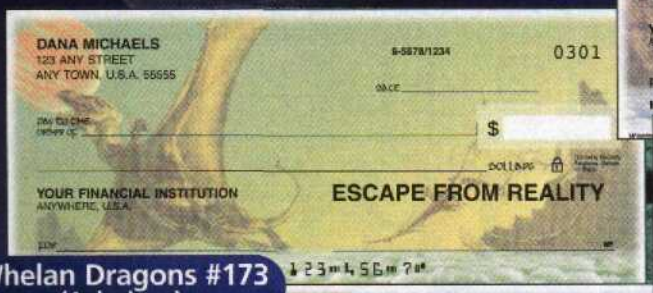

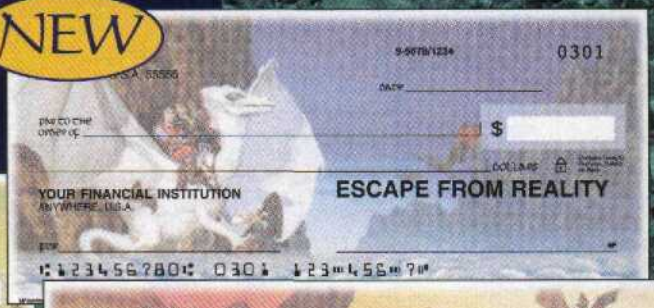

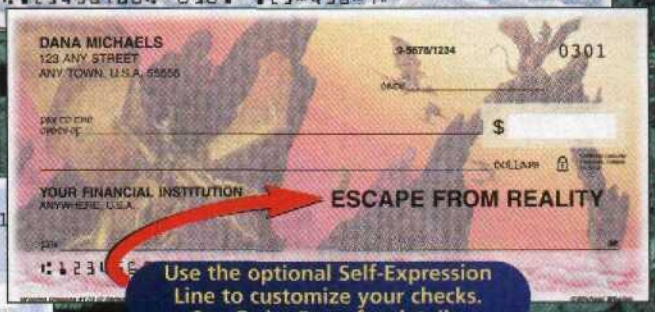

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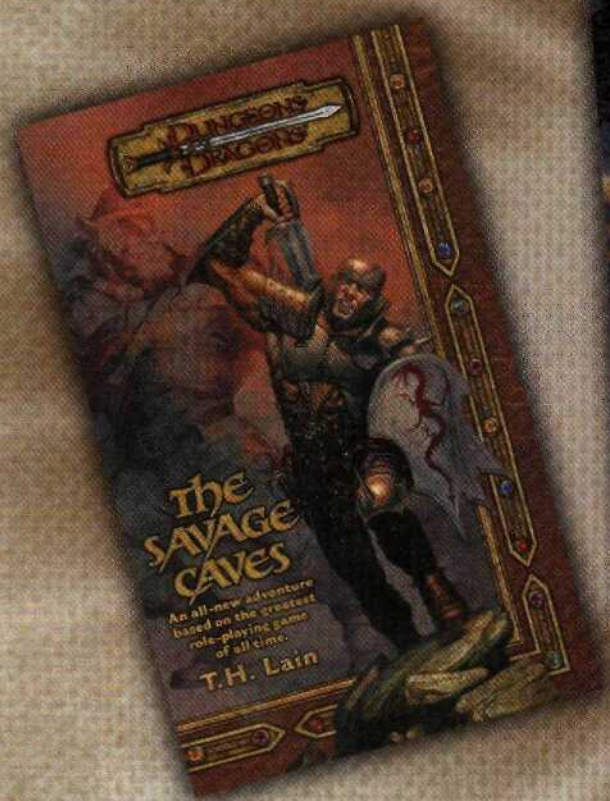

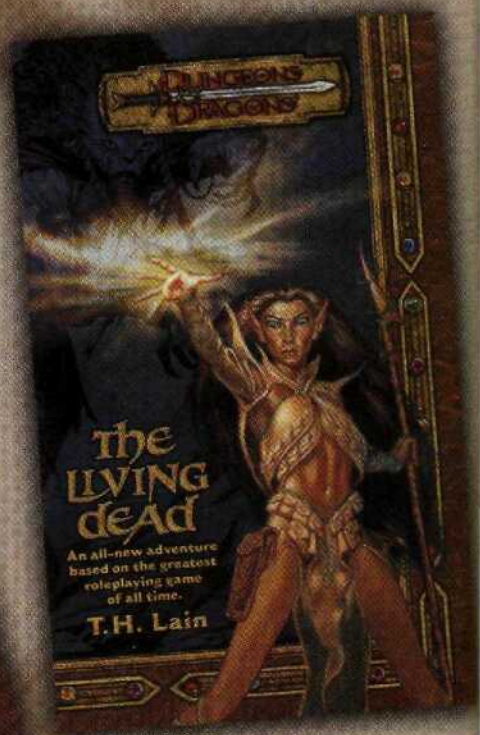

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[AT THE TABLE]

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DRAGON #298 is the first issue released under the rubric of Paizo Publishing, LLC. The company's name means, "I play!" in Greek. We hope it will always suggest that you win. The new company's focus will be on entertainment that engages the mind and pulls you into fascinating and rich universes. So, you're likely to see a wide variety of magazines come out of our company over the coming years. Before you panic about inevitable changes, however, let me reassure you: You'll still see the familiar (and in my case "old") faces in these pages because we brought the entire periodicals department of Wizards of the Coast into our new publishing venture. We're very excited about this because it means that those of us who produce the magazines now control our own destiny. Hasbro and Wizards of the Coast are very excited about this venture, as well. They love the way *DRAGON* and *DUNGEON* magazines have matured, and they wanted to reward us for our good work by letting us own our own business. They know we'll do an even better job on the magazines as we grow the business and cover other types of games and entertainment that are not part of the Hasbro/Wizards of the Coast empire. We are proud of the fact that Lucasfilm, Ltd. has also placed its imprimatur upon our new company, and we'll be producing *Star Wars™ Insider*, as well. For most of you, the name and ownership change won't mean anything. *DRAGON* will continue to be "All DUNGEONS & DRAGONS all the time," the same staff will be working on the magazines, the same printer will be printing them, subscriptions will be sent to the same Post Office box, and the same great writers and artists will still grace the pages. You should continue to find the publications at the same stores (maybe even more!) where you bought them before, and you should continue to get your subscriptions on the same schedule. We'll still be working closely with the talented designers and writers who create the games and game supplements at Wizards of the Coast, and we'll still strive to provide the most consistent information available on your favorite games.

So, what's the point of changing companies? Frankly, neither Hasbro nor Wizards of the Coast wants to be a magazine publisher. Both companies were built on publishing quality games and toys. That doesn't mean the companies don't see the value of the magazines. Both Hasbro in recent years and Wizards of the Coast in prior years invested considerable amounts in building up the magazines to their current positions of strength, but the magazines primarily existed to support Hasbro and Wizards of the Coast product lines. As creative staff, we are gamers interested in a wide variety of games: card games, miniatures, roleplaying games, board games, electronic games, and online games. We want to produce magazine titles that reflect all kinds of gaming, and we couldn't ask Hasbro to invest in those new titles. We can, however, invest in our own business as the future unfolds. In short, you have a creative staff with more freedom than ever before. We've always loved covering our own products, and we'll continue to do so with our current magazine titles, but we look forward to covering the whole gamut of gaming with new magazines in the future. In other words, with *DRAGON* under the auspices of Paizo Publishing, LLC, we all play and we all win!

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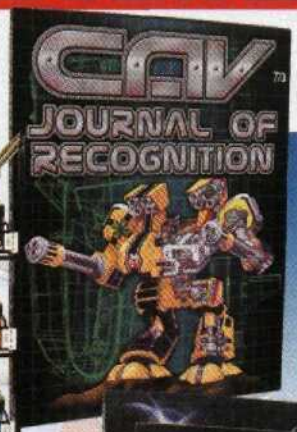

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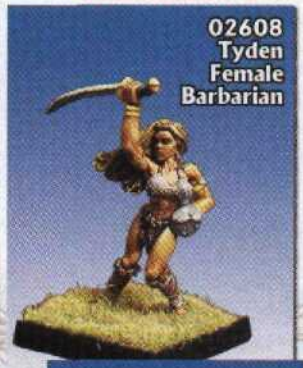

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FLESH FOR LOLTH

THE SECRET LIFE OF DARK ELVES

by Robin D. Laws · illustrated by Marc Sasso

O Flesh Carver, who wove the world;
Who made us from the darkest clay,
Spinning in it a red web of vein and artery,
We feel thy hunger.
O Lolth, humbly today we feed thee.
We feed you this flesh, this quivering meat.
With a blade like your jaws,
We divide muscle from bone.
Eat of this, the meal we consecrate to thee,
And do not this day devour us.

—adjuration from the Crimson Liturgy of Lolth

Through ancient stone corridors, wet and slick with moss, the drow gentry proceed. Screams and whimpers emanate from the amphitheater ahead. The cries prompt throaty laughter from a lithe, pitch-skinned priestess, her glistening body covered with dozens of gray-furred spiders that crawl across it, each the size of a baby's fist. The priestess's hair, white as an ice field, lays close to her narrow, oblong skull. Studs of polished silver protrude from her brow, cheekbone, and jawline.

Her gnome servant teeters from side to side, bent from the weight of the gilded chest she bears, laden with greenwine and sweetmeats. The servant's hands have been removed at the wrist; her eye sockets are scorched and empty. She cannot stop herself from shuddering.

Abruptly, a red-lipped jester capers up from behind, displaying steel hooks that jut up through his shoulder blades. He seeks a new victim, someone to run his chains of precious metal through. The priestess reaches out to rake the clown with razor-honed nails, casually opening troughs of crimson in the flesh of his back. The jester shimmies and wriggles his tongue out along his rouge-caked lips.

A hiss of anticipation arises in the crowd. Tonight the blood will flow like wine, and if they are lucky, the spider goddess herself will appear and tear off someone's head.

Evil Beneath Your Feet

Many good people of the surface world fear the drow, even though few have ever beheld one. They've heard legends of the night-skinned elves and of their cruel and hungry goddess, Lolth the Spider Queen. Some say that these tales, which attribute every imaginable depravity to the dark elves, cannot possibly be true. Although there is evil in the world, the idealists say, the accounts of adventurers who come back from the Underdark must be exaggerated. No society, not even a completely evil one, could possibly continue if its people were as perverse and unpredictably brutal as their enemies claim.

So much for the prattling of sages! Go to any tavern frequented by explorers and treasure seekers, and they will educate you: If anything, the stories fail to capture the true horror of the dark elven world.

FOR YOUR CAMPAIGN

If your campaign doesn't include drow, or if drow don't play a prevalent role in your campaign, you can still use many elements of this article. Below are some suggestions to help spark your imagination.

- All elves are evil. There is only one subrace of elves (those described in this article), and they dwell on the surface instead of underground.
- Every few generations or so, a dark elf child is born into an elven community. These anomalies are seen as portents and usually signal a change in a major power structure or in the environment and ecosystem. These dark-skinned children posses strange powers and abilities (see the drow description in the *Monster Manual*), and they are gifted (or plagued depending on one's opinion) with visions of the future. Although they are given a special role in their community and treated with a high level of respect, they are often shunned in their childhood by other youngsters and forced to become self-sufficient.
- The drow are outsiders from another realm. Having exhausted their own world of humanoids to enslave and sacrifice to their hungry god, they've begun invading other realms in search of prey.
- As the result of a major environmental catastrophe, a new race (the drow) has been born on the planet's surface, perfectly suited to the planet's post-apocalyptic, hostile environment in which only the strongest and most clever survive. Never having known peace, this new race has no concept of good and is multiplying at an alarming rate.
- There are no dark elves. Instead, there is a cult of evil surface elves who refer to themselves as "drow" and worship a spider god named Lolth. They believe that by sacrificing thousands of humanoids, Lolth will bless the dying elven race, and they'll once again reign supreme over the other races.

FOR YOUR CHARACTER

Don't play a drow? Don't worry! There are still a number of ways you can use the information presented in this article. For example, you can use it to create an interesting background and plot hook for your character. Below are some ideas that you can use as is, or you might use them as a springboard for creating other interesting backgrounds for your character.

- You killed my father; prepare to die. The drow murdered your entire family, leaving you orphaned as a child. Maybe you were captured and tortured by drow, but you managed to escape their clutches. You've studied their ways and learned their weaknesses, and now you are ready to fulfill your promise of revenge. You won't rest until the world is rid of this abominable race.
- Luke, I am your father. You've always looked a little different from the other elves. Your skin is a bit darker than normal, your hair a little more blonde, and your eyesight is a little sharper in the darkness. Your mother, who raised you alone, is soon to leave the world of the living, and she is ready to tell you her terrible secret: Your father is a drow! Torn, you must decide whether to seek out your father and learn this new aspect of your heritage or keep your mother's secret exactly that—a secret.
- Oh brother, wherefore art thou? Your sibling has been kidnapped by the drow for sacrifice, and it is up to you to rescue him before he becomes food for their hungry goddess. Having received training in reconnaissance, your plan is to infiltrate drow territory as a merchant and then glean as much information on the enemy as possible before leading a rescue attempt. Although your mission is dangerous, you have no choice—you are your sibling's last hope.

"We Are All Lolth's Meat"

Drow society survives as it does because a powerful and capricious goddess wills it so. Lolth—known as the Mother of Mandibles, the Flesh Carver, and the Weaver of Webs—rules drow existence. Through her terrible earthly agents, the priestesses, she takes an interest in each individual, from painful birth to wretched death. From early childhood, all drow know that they exist only to provide their goddess with food and pleasure. Those who survive to adulthood learn not to fear this eternal truth, but to embrace it. They face any hazard with steely resolve, knowing that no danger can be remotely as terrifying as the face of Lolth. To worship her is to blot out doubt and hesitation. Her dark and beady eyes contain the only truth: Life is but a fleeting dance between predator and prey. Eventually, everyone is torn apart and digested. Therefore, the only way to grant meaning to existence is to ensure that you make many kills before you die and that you show your taste and style by making your prey suffer exquisitely as they expire. A drow who cannot find delight in agony and destruction is no drow at all, fit only for ritual slaughter. When courage wavers, the true drow need only chant to herself the central credo of her faith: "We are all Lolth's meat."

Although all drow embrace death, each individual naturally prefers to embrace the death of others over her own. The desire to avoid becoming Lolth's next meal drives all interactions in a dark elven community. Even the mightiest priestesses must watch their backs to ensure that ambitious young acolytes don't schedule them for the Flesh Carver's feeding chamber. For every hundred adults in a drow community, its priestesses must make one sacrifice per week. The priestesses satisfy the grinding demand for new sacrifices in various ways. Vigorously they seek blasphemers and lawbreakers to consign to their blood altar. They solicit informants, who report the infractions of others to avoid becoming victims themselves.

Only on rare and glorious occasions can a drow community justify the sacrifice of one of its own adults. Its victims are most often slaves or captives. Still, shortages of captives can occur at any moment, and smart drow always make sure they have at least one patroness among the local priesthood. Each priestess surrounds herself with a network of toadies who do her bidding. Normally, no priestess dares sacrifice the favorites of a higher-ranking colleague. Although a wheedling and servile manner never harms one's chances of success with a priestess, a proud and dignified drow can prove herself indispensable in other ways. Renowned artists, skilled torturers, knowledgeable sages, and accomplished craftsmen can ensure their survival by serving both the priestesses and the community at large. Among all their favorites, the priestesses covet hunters the most. These hunters are drow adventurers who rove the passageways of the Underdark in search of intelligent captives to enslave or sacrifice.

Lolth's priestesses know what she best likes to eat: Drow are better to sacrifice than other races, adults are better than children. She prefers healthy individuals to the sick or feeble, and the more powerful and skilled a character, the better. Among non-drow, the Spider Queen vastly favors humanoids over all other creature types and would rather devour the good and lawful than the evil or chaotic. Unintelligent beings (with an Intelligence less than 3) are beneath her interest, for they cannot understand their suffering. To place a mere animal on her altar is to risk being eaten yourself.

The priestesses determine if their sacrifices lack sufficient quantity and quality to please their goddess. When they must know for certain, a *commune* spell provides the Great Spider's direct answer. Usually, though, experienced priestesses can, by reading omens, tell if Lolth is content with their gifts. One telltale sign of the goddess's displeasure is the success of one's enemies. If, for example, a party of adventurers penetrates the drow community's defenses, it is clear that the Spider Queen has withdrawn her favor. To win it back, the priestesses must increase their regimen of sacrifices—starting with the invaders.

Bloodied From the Birth-Sac

A notable difference between drow and their topside cousins lies in their fertility rate. Most elves have very low fertility rates, in keeping with their long lifespans. Drow mothers, in contrast, give birth as often as the more fertile races, such as humans and orcs. Their greater fertility reflects the crushing mortality rate among drow infants and youngsters. Drow females might give birth to ten times the number of babies than the females from other elven subraces do, but this does not mean that they end up with more adult children.

It is common for pregnant drow to carry twins or even triplets. Even in these cases, multiple births are rare, as the strongest of the fetuses feeds on its siblings in the womb. Pregnant drow can sometimes feel these mortal combats take place in their bellies. Such prenatal battles produce in their mothers a euphoric sensation, referred to in the Undercommon tongue as chad-zak. The feeling is infinitely stronger than that produced in

the bedchamber or by any intoxicant. Without it, it is doubtful that drow women, selfish to the core, would ever deign to suffer the inconveniences of reproduction.

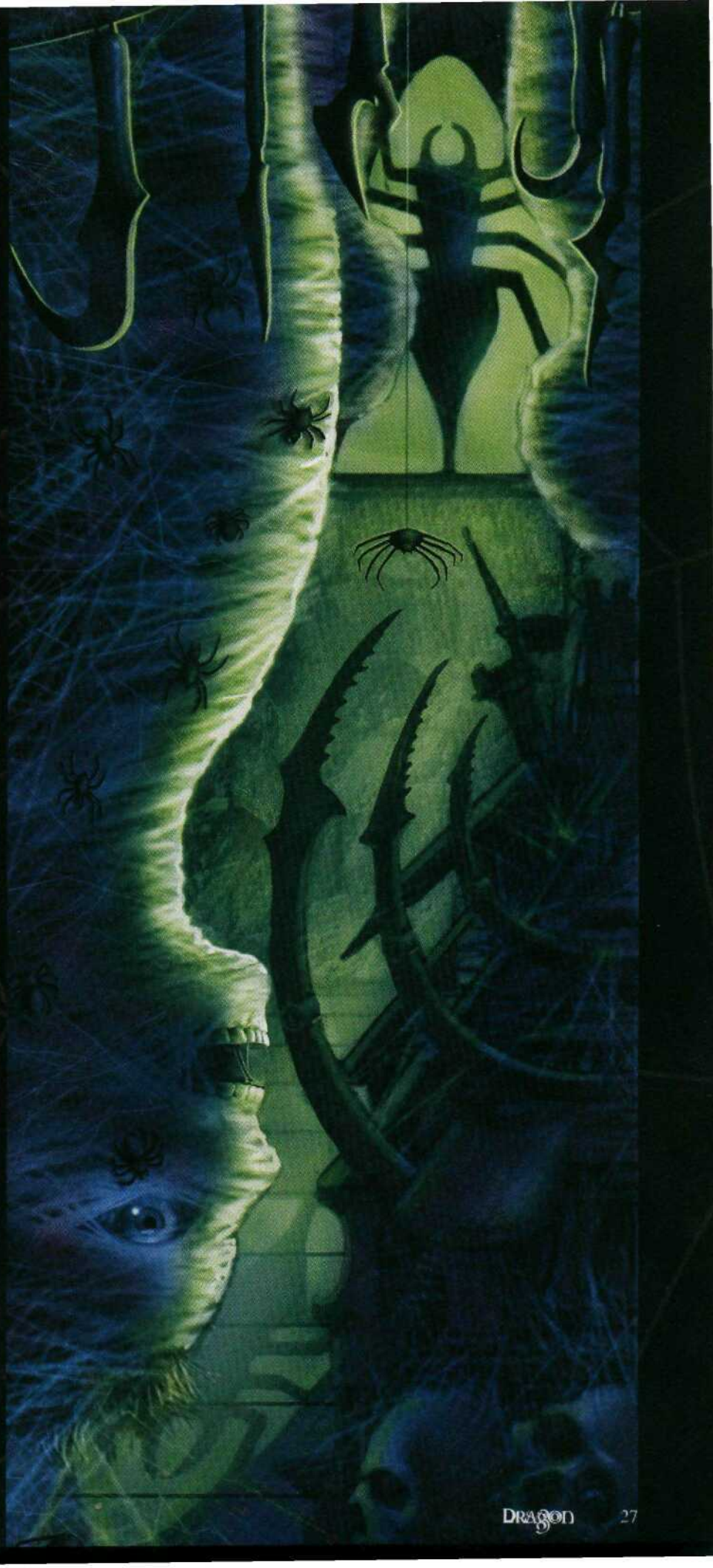
Chad-zak occurs up to four times per multiple pregnancy. It usually happens early in the third trimester. Mothers who experience repeated chad-zaks usually feel them in quick succession, once every one or two days. The final chad-zak indicates one fetus's successful slaying of its rivals. This process does not result in

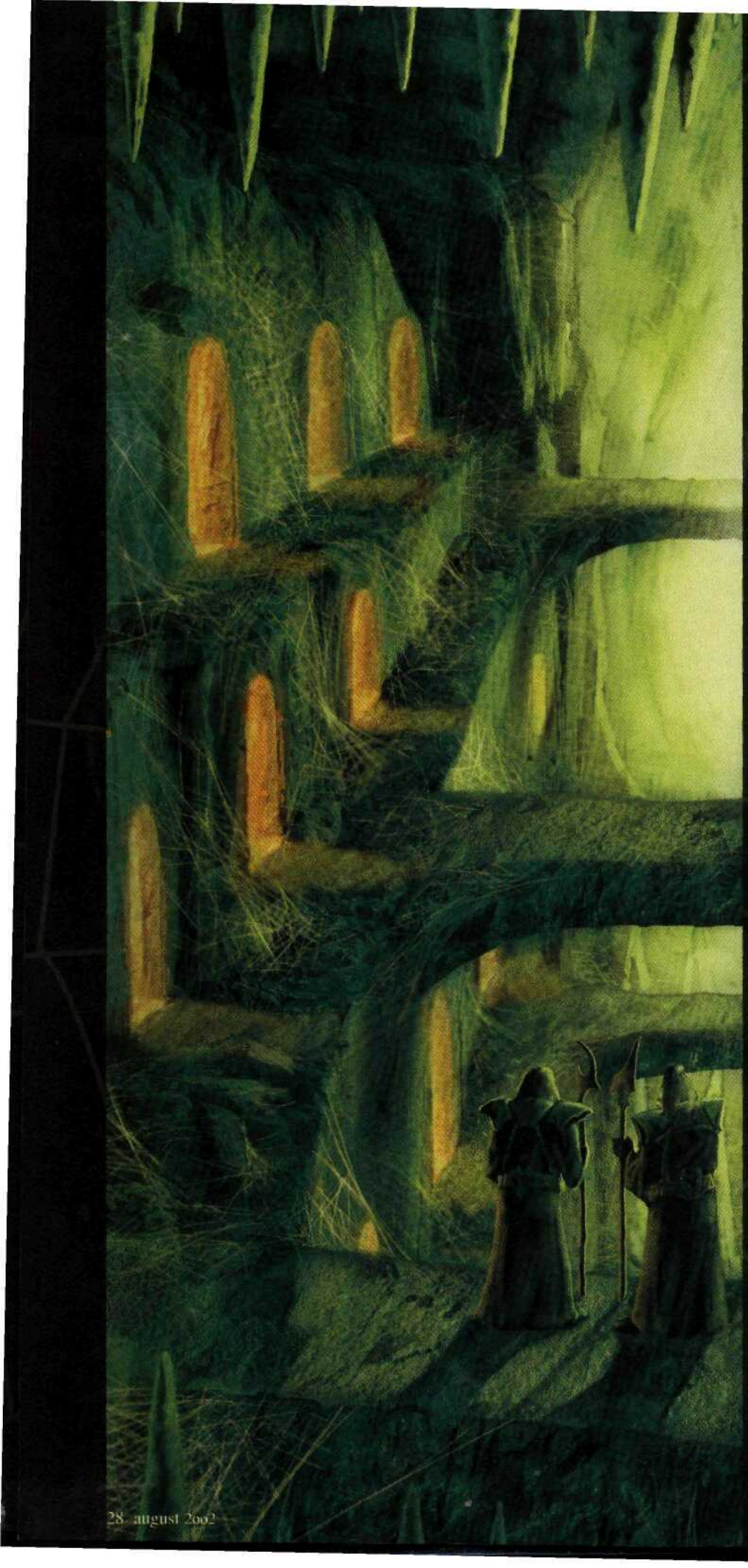
PRIESTESS WAR

A terrible logic arises from Lolth's taste in sacrifices. If she prefers drow over non-drow, and high-level characters over lowly ones, it stands to reason that her favorite victims are her own top priestesses. Thus, the priestesses have devised a way to avoid winding up on their own altars: They band together. Most of the time, a community's priestesses maintain an attitude of respectful, but mistrustful, distance from one another. If one priestess moves against another, the rest tend to side against the aggressor. The annals of drow history recount several famous incidents in which rebellious priestesses lined up allies against a High Priestess only to be betrayed by their supposed allies. A priestess must be extremely unpopular before her fellows will stand idly by for her sacrifice.

Open conflict within a priesthood is not unknown, however. In almost all such cases, a schism erupts between two sides that are evenly matched with one another. These fights are prone to expand into outright civil wars that engulf entire communities. Each faction of priestesses uses its favored lackeys, soldiers, and hunters to war against the other. Dark elven historians have even documented cases in which warring priestesses recruited outside adventurers from the surface to bolster their forces.

Lolth never intervenes in such struggles, even when it means the demise of entire communities. The success of the predator should never be restrained by sympathy for the prey.





stillbirths; the slain are absorbed back into the mother's body.

Playing For Keeps

The fact that a newborn drow has survived in the womb and made it through birth does not guarantee its further survival. All drow children, even those not yet able to walk, feel an instinctive homicidal impulse toward their siblings. In fact, when opportunity rears its head, most drow youngsters happily kill any playmates. Despite this fact—or, rather, because of it—children are not kept apart in drow nurseries. Their mothers want the strong children to sharpen their predatory inclinations, polishing off their weaker offspring in the process. No drow wants a weak or incompetent child to reach adulthood, where she might bring shame to the family. Note that strength need not be physical; it is better to have a spindly child whose cleverness allows her to engineer the deaths of others than a well-muscled brute who is easily fooled. It goes without saying that any drow bent toward mercy or virtue stands out as glaringly weak. In the unlikely event that his siblings don't gang up on him and crush his windpipe, the mother will surely send such a shameful freak of nature to the priestesses, as fodder for their ceremonial daggers. It is for this reason that good drow are exceedingly rare. To survive without enthusiastically embracing evil is next to impossible.

Drow parents rarely visit their children. Some weak-minded males might enjoy playing with their spawn, but nurses and other servants keep a watchful eye on them.

No doubt because it is such a dangerous time for them, drow children grow up much faster than the children of other elves. By the age of eight, drow children can walk, talk, and speak. They are then carted off to receive schooling. Junior priestesses tutor the young, savagely punishing them for misbehavior. Students might be caged, doused with scalding or freezing water, poked with sharpened sticks, poisoned, burned, or simply pulverized with fists and clubs. Such ill treatments scarcely seem to slow down these untamable children, who have already proven themselves bullies and survivors at home. Priestesses never fatally harm their charges; if they want them dead, it's wasteful not to sacrifice them.

Religious doctrine is the main object of study. Youngsters are also drilled in combat maneuvers, literacy, mathematics, alchemy, natural history, and various artisan skills. Students who demonstrate an affinity for magic are often taken out of classes and apprenticed to wizards and sorcerers.

School continues until the age of twenty, when adolescence officially begins. By this time, one out of every three students will have been murdered by classmates. Another one in ten will have been sent to the temple as food for Lolth.

THE ETHICS OF DROW KILLING

Adventurers who want to maintain their good alignments must always think before they smite. Just because the vast majority of orcs or bugbears, for example, tend to be evil, does not guarantee that any particular orc or bugbear deserves to be mercilessly cut down in the name of truth and virtue.

With drow, such qualms do not apply. Virtually any individual in a drow community has already proven him- or herself a murderer—even small children.

Be warned, though: By the same token, almost all drow, including very young ones, are experienced killers and might boast shockingly high levels as warriors, rogues, or sorcerers. More than one adventurer has died an ignominious death after relaxing his guard with a drow child.

Drow wanderers might, in exceedingly rare circumstances, claim the mantle of goodness. Some individuals exile themselves from their murderous communities in search of a peaceful life out of Lolth's reach. In most cases, they'll be consumed with shame and self-loathing, unable to fully shake the savagery of their formative years. A supposedly good drow might not gut you in the night as you sleep, but he'll still constantly wrestle with powerful impulses toward dishonesty, selfishness, and treachery. The fact that surface-dwellers shun them at all costs makes life even more difficult for the infinitesimally tiny fraction of drow who sincerely seek redemption.

Tests of Treachery

During the years that bridge childhood and adulthood, young drow are expected to choose a role for themselves in society and to set themselves on a path toward achieving it. They typically latch on to mentors, learning their skills and acquainting themselves with their contacts. Once a young adult drow gains enough experience, she waits for something terrible to befall her mentor (or she might engineer it herself if required by one of Lolth's tests) and attempts to step into her mentor's place. Typically this attempt requires conflict with rival apprentices or others with a claim on the mentor's clients, position, and property. It is considered a high crime for drow to mentor their own children, although dispensation from high priestesses can sometimes be had, for a price.

Masters are given the rights of life or death over their protégés, but then, so is everyone else. Adolescents may not ingratiate themselves with priestesses, and are therefore without protection in drow society. They must keep their heads down, while at the same time proving themselves useful to their patrons. To tip the balance either way is risky. A too-humble apprentice is perceived as easy to bully, while overly ambitious ones alarm their masters, who begin to fear assassination.

At the approximate age of eighty, adolescents are expected to complete a task indicating their mastery of their chosen role. A hunter must capture a valuable sacrifice, while a musician must perform a particularly difficult ballad. Not only must the drow perform her task well, she must not show any self-doubt or fear. Doing so means failure in the eyes of Lolth, and it results in horrible punishments. Success indicates that the drow is ready to be recognized as an adult. Adolescents who pass the test without dispatching their mentors must set up shop for themselves, going into business independently.

Murder Ballads

As adults, drow look for protégés to exploit, rivals to destroy, and opportunities for pleasure. Wealth and luxury are seen as outward signals of success, but the true measure of an adult's status lies in the number of people she's murdered (or caused to be murdered), and the creative manner in which her prey were made to suffer as they slowly perished. Just as a slow, torture-filled slaying wins more admiration than a mercifully quick sneak attack, different victims accrue varying amounts of prestige. Killing a victim well known to the community confers more glory than a mere outsider. Credit for sacrificial victims goes to those who capture them. Thus, the hunter class is among the most admired in drow society, second only to the priestesses.

An ingenious evisceration means nothing if others do not know of it. Hence, bards have a crucial role among the drow. Social climbers hire bards to commemorate their slayings in song. If possible, they even invite the balladeers to attend the killings, to more vividly portray the slaughter. A skilled bard with a popular following can greatly enhance a drow's prestige, transforming a run-of-the-mill execution into a celebrated slaughter. Bards patrol the winding passageways of an underground community, yipping out their gore-spattered ballads in the screechy, affected tone expected of a drow singer. The hiring of a famed bard can cost tens of thousands of gold pieces, and the more an individual drow pays, the greater her chances of social elevation. The subject of the song might, for example, attract a more powerful priestess as a patron or gain new, well-heeled customers for her business.

Especially popular murder songs outlast not only the fame of their victims, but of the killers. Along with newly commissioned songs, bards perform timeless classics such as "The Burning of Farza-Lach," "Tornon's Guts," and "Seven Drips from the Gore Cord."

Accompanying a drow bard's keening voice is a complex, lute-like instrument known as vazhan-do. Their tight strings can be plucked furiously, unleashing a violent torrent of notes, or slowly bent, producing slow and disturbing sounds. Any of the sixty-four strings of the standard vazhan-do can be quickly unstrung from the instrument, doubling as a garrote. It is not surprising that bards often double as assassins, as their nightly rounds allow them to travel throughout the community without question. Although their status as hired killers is well-known, it would be unthinkable to restrict their movements.

To refuse to give a bard hospitality is to seem both cowardly and unsporting. However, it is one thing to invite a bard into one's home and quite another to let him out of one's sight for even a moment.

The Tests

Lolth does not make it easy for her minions to please her. All drow feel a sense of creeping unease as they progress in their careers. This is true no matter what roles they've selected in life. All fear the day when they reach a level of achievement that catches the cruel attention of their grim goddess. Even the all-powerful priestesses are not immune to the dreaded Lolthtanchwi—the "Punishments of Lolth." Lolth puts her worshipers through a number of terrifying tests throughout their lives, the first of which occurs in late adolescence (1st level in game terms). The tests continue as the drow progresses in strength and skill, each one more demanding and with more terrifying consequences than the last (for more on the tests and punishments of Lolth, see "Punishments of Loth" in this issue).

Drow perceive when each test is about to descend on them. Their senses become painfully acute, and the world seems both more crisply real and more menacing. In some cases, horrifying visions preclude the start of a test, while in others, a sign, such as the sighting of a particular spider, indicates a new test. Different tasks are required of the drow for each test, and they invariably require the drow to risk both her life and all she has achieved in life to date.

Love Wounds

As is true for many species of spiders, drow mating rituals are unpredictable and fraught with peril—for the male.

Women enjoy an unquestioned upper hand in drow society. The priestesses run all political affairs, and grim-faced matriarchs control families and their business proceedings. According to drow stereotypes, females are smart, cool-headed, and cruel, while males are foolish, impulsive, and emotionally weak. Males kill and maim to defend themselves and to prove they are not cowards. Females kill and maim because they enjoy it.

Females marry for political reasons but are not monogamous. They may dally with their followers, with travelers from other communities, or even with servants and slaves. Husbands are expected to remain faithful to their wives and are usually sacrificed if caught cheating. On the other hand, if a powerful priestess takes a liking to another woman's husband, she can have him consigned to the sacrificial altar for having the temerity to refuse her his favors. Charming, well-muscled males often face such no-win situations. For this reason, handsome men often disfigure themselves or spend long periods away from the community in all-male hunter bands.

Drow custom allows its females to engage in cross-species coupling; if a male engages in such a dalliance, it is considered a capital offense. Any sexual contact between a drow and a drider means instant death, no matter what the status of the drow. Congress with driders remains the mightiest taboo in drow culture.

In the Drip, Drip, Dripping Dark

As fearsome as they are, the drow are beset by many powerful enemies. They must defend their subterranean communities against mind flayers, dwarven warriors, and other humanoid adventuring parties. Drow settlements cannot be cleared out by merely charging from room to room and killing the inhabitants of each chamber. Dark elves react quickly to intrusion. They install sophisticated magical alarms and mount systematic patrols throughout a wide perimeter so that the entire community is mobilized for battle by the time enemies can reach its gates. The drow wear down opponents with waves of conscripted soldiers and common soldiers before sending out high-level hunters and mighty priestesses.

It is possible, though difficult, to gain peaceful admittance to a drow enclave. As lovers of luxury, dark elves hunger for unusual foods, strange intoxicants, fine fabrics, beautiful jewels, and other exotic items they cannot produce themselves. They're also always in the market for slaves; specimens too damaged to work can at least be torture victims.

Drow pay for these items with captured loot from raids or with unique magic items produced by their talented wizards. They ensure premium value for these items by keeping the techniques of their creation secret. Most decent individuals abhor all signs of drow craftsmanship and look askance at those who make open use of drow magic items. Although many sellers of magical curios refuse to handle these items, they fetch high prices in lands that have a tendency for evil.

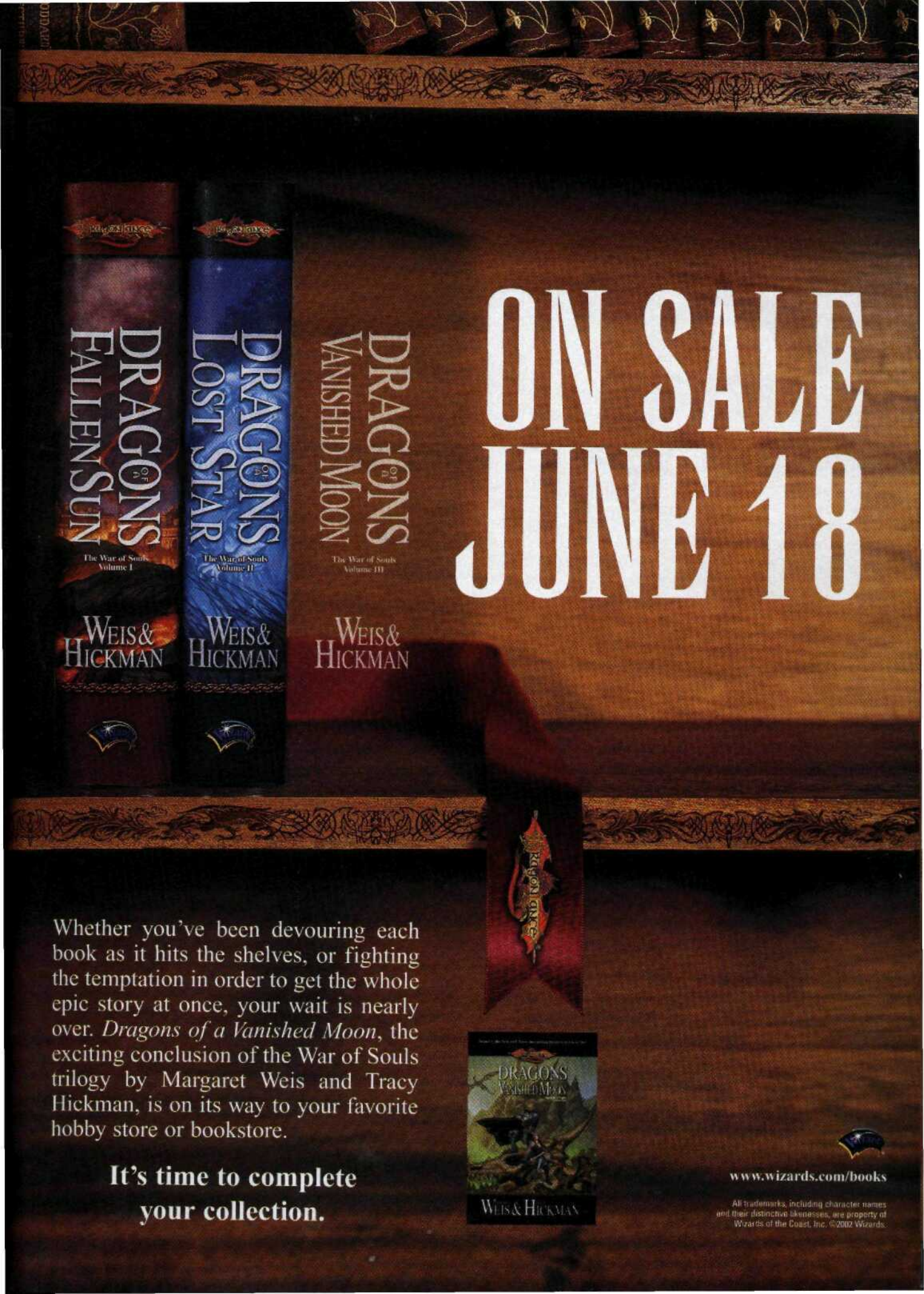
There are easier ways of making a living than running trade caravans into the Underdark, but a few intrepid individuals have earned fortunes this way. Drow do not easily trust outsiders, even when vouched for by traders they already know. Only after many successful and mutually profitable trade missions are non-drow given free access to a dark elven settlement. Even an ally of long standing can always be hauled off for ritual murder when he commits a major gaffe, or if the drow are desperate enough for sacrifices.

Drow are most likely to admit adventuring parties past their gates as the bound, gagged, and unconscious captives of hunting parties. Most captives are maimed and put to work as slaves, but adventurers are usually treated with extreme care until an auspicious time for sacrifice arrives. Still, it is not unknown for adventurers to escape from captivity and fight their way out of a drow enclave.

Spiders, Spiders, Everywhere

The chambers of any drow settlement crawl with spiders. From mites the size of pinpricks to guardian tarantulas the size of houses, there is no area of a dark elven community devoid of spiders. They skitter in swarms across walls and along floors. They drop from ceilings. Webs, some stronger than rope, hang from every imaginable surface.

Although guests might be unnerved by the spiders' inescapable presence, the locals pay them no heed. Cobwebs are waved or burnt away without comment. The squishing and crunching sound of stepped-on spiders is a constant refrain. Drow do not bother to check for spiders before sitting. A matriarch might idly seize a fist-sized spider while negotiating a trade arrangement and proceed to casually rip its legs off, one by one. Drow breads and puddings are speckled with stray legs, mandibles, and eggs. The overwhelming presence of so many spiders is often disconcerting to non-drow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visitors, but drow themselves hardly take note of the creatures.

Theater of Atrocity

There are no more fervent followers of the arts than dark elves—provided that the works in question revel in demented evil.

Lolth's ritual slayings can be seen as a gruesome form of performance art. Although everyday sacrifices are conducted in small temples or shrines, events featuring notable victims are often held in large amphitheaters in which the entire community can gather. These events provoke a carnival atmosphere, with raucous laughter filling the hall as jesters leap through the stalls. Bards stroll the aisles, singing of murder, and celebrants haul in food and wine to consume throughout the event. Intoxicating vapors waft from censers, making hearts beat faster and hands tremble with bloodlust. Priestesses and other members of the gentry watch from private boxes fixed with blinds that can be drawn for privacy. Everything from conspiracies to trysts might be negotiated in the confines of these boxes.

Most drow bloodsports are horribly brutal and gory. In one popular entertainment, a bound captive is held beneath an apparatus that slowly drips a magical acid onto his forehead, one drop at a time. The solvent opens up a hole in the victim's skull and then melts the brain. During this time, orbs of telepathic power communicate the dying victim's memories to the salivating crowd. Attendees vicariously savor the captive's most traumatic and painful experiences as he slowly succumbs.

Not all bloodletting in the amphitheater is fatal. Torturers often display their supreme skill with their filleting blades by leaving victims just on the brink of death. The most artful torturers become as famous as bards. Even torture victims, left alive to magically heal between performances, can become drow celebrities if they can communicate their suffering artfully enough.

Drow taste in the decorative arts is appalling to non-evil humanoids. One particularly skilled class of drow artisans specializes in incredibly lifelike sculpture that looks as if it's created from living flesh. In truth, the sculptures are carved from blocks of drider silk, elaborately hand-painted and made to move through complex mechanical craftsmanship. Many are life-sized depictions of torture or mayhem. Common motifs include a human paladin impaled on a pike, a spider eating the brains of a halfling, or the good elven god, Corellon Larethian, carved up on the torture table.

In some drow communities, more abstract pieces are popular, such as a tapestry of liquid flesh in which hundreds of oozing eyes continually drift upward and downward in a regular wave pattern.

Predation, Travel, and Warfare

For many male drow, finding peace and autonomy is possible only on the trail, away from their wives, mothers, and sisters. (Although nothing stops female drow from becoming hunters, women tend to stay at home, closer to the levers of power.) Hunters win status for themselves and wealth for their families by capturing slaves and sacrificial victims. They especially seek out adventurers to attack, because such powerful individuals are highly prized sacrificial commodities.

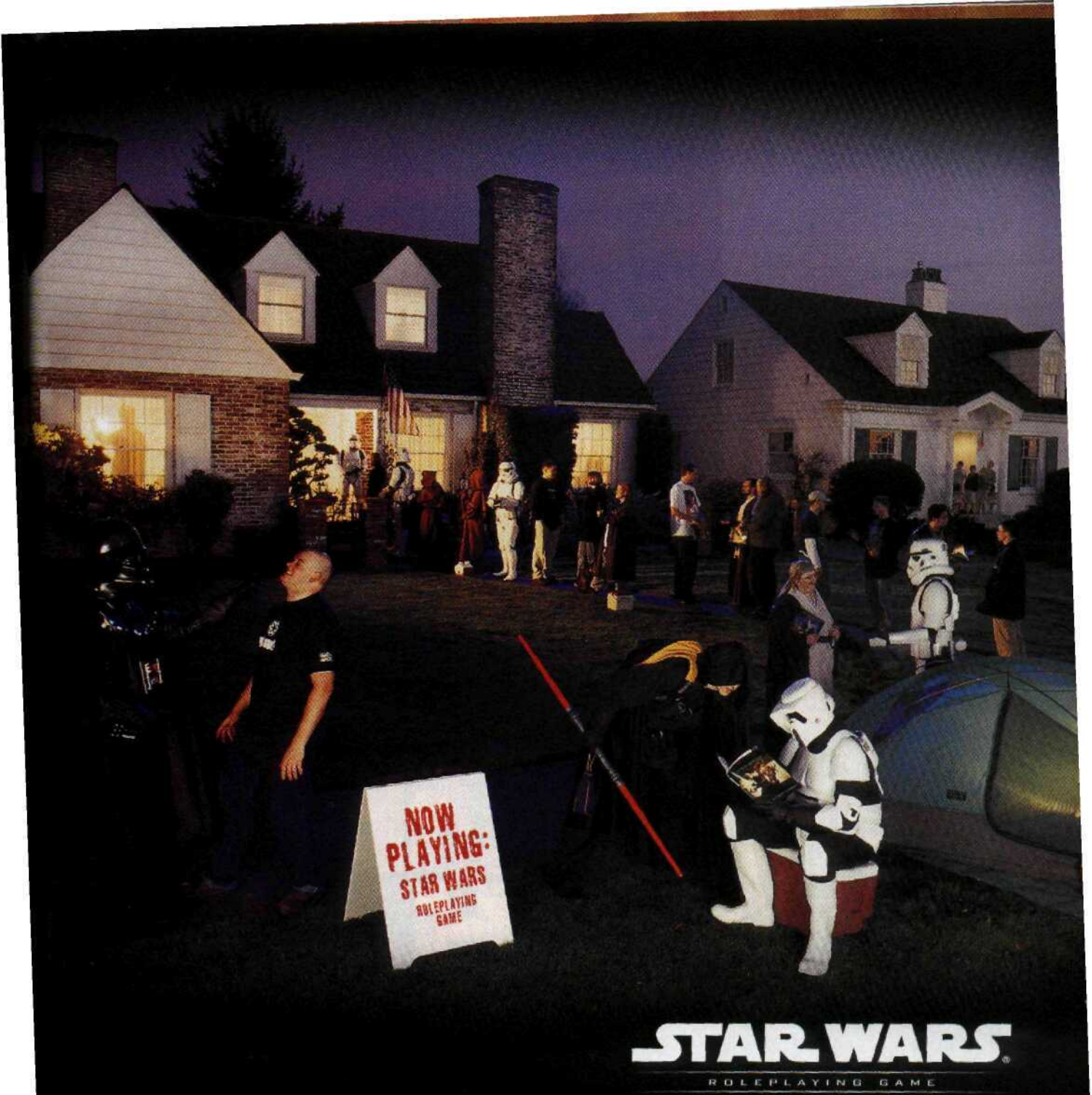
It is a short step for some discontented dark elves to keep wandering and never return home. So-called "good" drow are typically former hunters who have decided to find places for themselves in other societies. Even when fighting for apparently good causes, they find their ingrained predatory habits hard to shake.

Prosperous drow communities might decide to give Lolth her favorite gift of all and launch warfare against a nearby town, village, or underground settlement. The object of such conquests is always the same: mass murder. Victorious drow slaughter entire populations in the name of Lolth. On rare occasions, ambitious priestesses seek alliances with other drow enclaves, hoping to build armies big enough to overrun and slaughter entire nations. Such efforts might be successful in the interim but are generally short-lived, as it does not take much provocation for jealous priestesses from different communities to turn on one another.

Death and Burial

In the bloodthirsty culture of the drow, the words "burial" and "old age" do not exist. It is rare for a drow to survive past 400 years, and sooner or later, a drow powerful enough to have gained so many years will certainly attract the attention of Lolth and end up on the sacrificial altar. Drow who die of natural causes are considered to have shamed Lolth. Their bodies are simply left to rot, their carcasses feeding the insects and vermin. In some cases however, such as when a more prominent drow dies of natural causes, the priestesses might choose to use the death as an example to other drow, imparting on them the shame that comes with never having caught the eye of Lolth and been called to sacrifice. The corpse of such a drow is strung up over the door of her family home, suspended by delicate spider silk, and left until only bones remain. This serves as a symbol of the family's shame, and a reminder to other drow of the benefits of murdering particularly long-lived family members. Drow who fall in battle or who have been killed by another drow receive a "blessing" from Lolth. Rather than being thrown on the garbage heap or left to rot over the doorway of one's ancestral home, the flesh on their bodies is ceremoniously stripped from the bones by a priestess, dried, and used for clothing enhancements or to make czak'ls, special bowls used to collect blood drained from sacrificed victims. Their remaining body parts and bones are soaked in a strong acid, and after a few days, nothing remains.

The drow have no concept of ancestor worship, and they do not grieve for fallen family members. Instead, they are too busy scheming how to use the death to their advantage. This might mean gaining new power and prestige within the family, new business contacts, or new inherited wealth. On the extremely rare occasion that a drow feels loss over the death of a mate or family member, it is advantageous to hide such feelings. A dark elf stupid enough to demonstrate an emotion as useless as grief is considered an abomination, and quickly and painfully sacrificed to Lolth.



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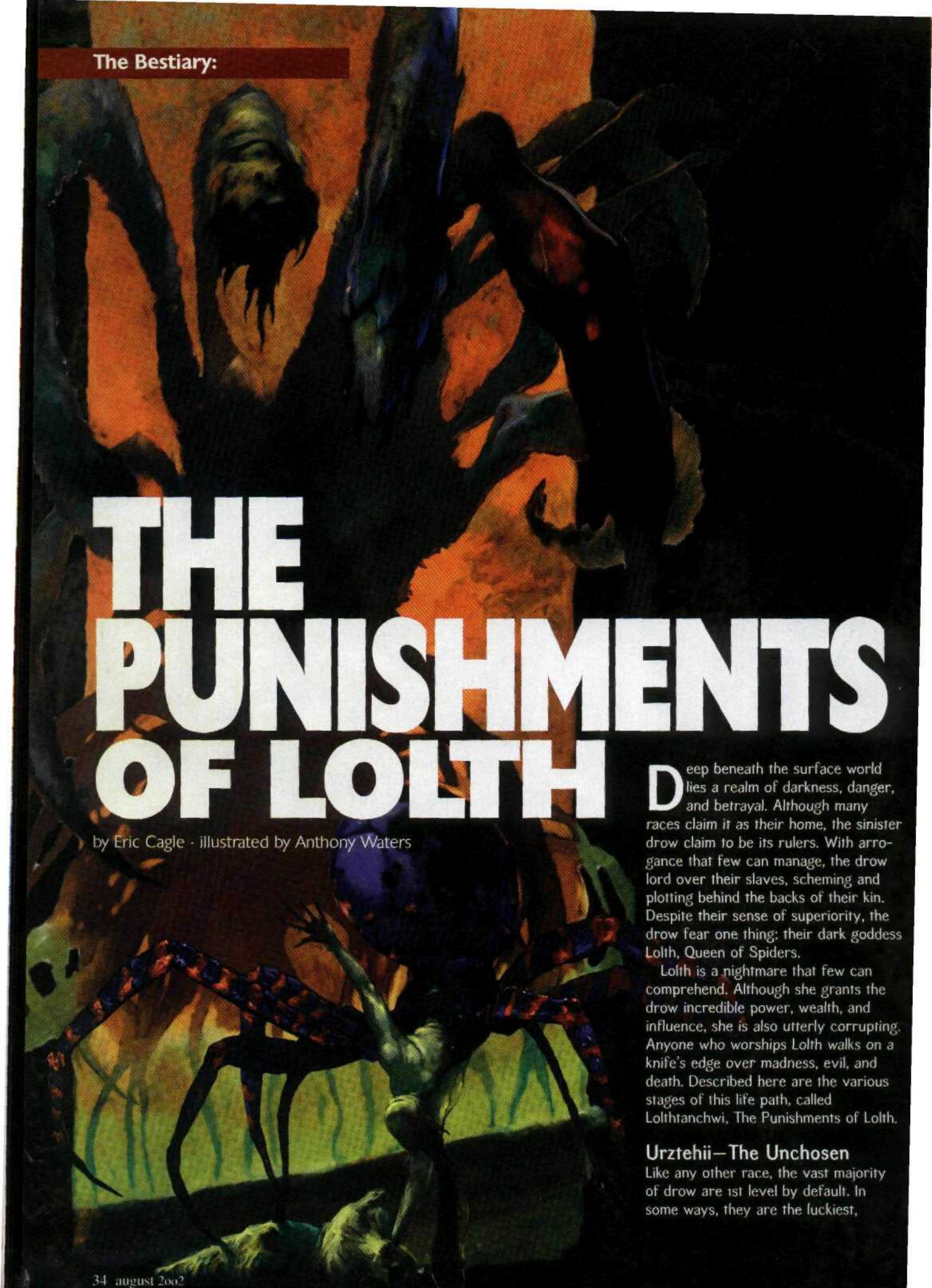


THE PUNISHMENTS OF LOLTH

by Eric Cagle · illustrated by Anthony Waters

Deep beneath the surface world lies a realm of darkness, danger, and betrayal. Although many races claim it as their home, the sinister drow claim to be its rulers. With arrogance that few can manage, the drow lord over their slaves, scheming and plotting behind the backs of their kin. Despite their sense of superiority, the drow fear one thing: their dark goddess Lolth, Queen of Spiders.

Lolth is a nightmare that few can comprehend. Although she grants the drow incredible power, wealth, and influence, she is also utterly corrupting. Anyone who worships Lolth walks on a knife's edge over madness, evil, and death. Described here are the various stages of this life path, called Loltht anchwi, The Punishments of Lolth.

Urztehii—The Unchosen

Like any other race, the vast majority of drow are 1st level by default. In some ways, they are the luckiest,

because they do not have to endure the torment and agony of having Lolth's many eyes turn their way. To the haughty upper classes this is just as well, for they consider drow of such puny power and low status to be cattle and slaves for the elite.

If a drow does not have the ambition to advance in society, then this is where they remain, toiling away as soldiers, servants, and playthings for the rest. They will die, and Lolth will consume their souls in the afterlife. Most are resigned to their fate, and they try to cram as much hedonism into their miserable lives as they can manage. This usually involves tormenting as many non-drow as possible.

When drow, through accident or determination, show a high degree of ambition, they play a dangerous game. Not only must they prove themselves to their kin, but they must also show Lolth that they are worthy in her eyes. This is known as the Test of Darkness.

The Zwy'il

The drow word zwy'il (pronounced zwy-ILL) means "candidate" and is used to represent drow who are being tested by Lolth. In a way, all drow who worship Lolth are considered zwy'il, for the Queen of Spiders is constantly reviewing and putting her children through series after series of tests of worthiness. However, most drow, especially clerics, reserve the term for specific drow who show the obvious signs of the tests.

The Paths of Lolthtanchwi

The Punishments of Lolth are a series of tests that a drow must go through as she increases in power. The Queen of Spiders is a fickle, cruel, and exacting mistress who delights in seeing drow break down into chaos and insanity as often as she enjoys seeing them expand and dominate.

Each of these tests takes place as the drow advances in level. She is compelled to pass it, or ruin is certain. The drow call these tests "punishments" (chwi, in Drow) because there is no benefit to passing, other than being able to live. Drow who have managed to evade the terrifying web of Lolth's power by gaining the favor of another deity are not affected by these tests, but they also become the target of every Lolth-worshiping drow.

Aracholoth

Medium-Size Aberration

Hit Dice:	3d8+6 (hp 19)
Initiative:	+2 (Dex)
Speed:	30 ft., climb 15 ft.
AC:	15 (+2 Dex, +3 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 13
Attacks:	Bite +3 melee; or shortbow +4 ranged
Damage:	Bite 1d6+1 and poison; or shortbow 1d6
Face/Reach:	5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks:	Gaze, poison, spell-like abilities
Special Qualities:	SR 14
Saves:	Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +4
Abilities:	Str 12, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 11, Wis 16, Cha 10
Skills:	Climb +10, Concentration +7, Hide +8, Listen +7, Move Silently +8, Spot +7
Feats:	–
Climate/Terrain:	Any underground
Organization:	Solitary, pair, troupe (2-7 plus 7-12 Small monstrous spiders), or company (1-2 driders, 7-12 aracholoths, plus 11-20 Small monstrous spiders)
Challenge Rating:	3
Treasure:	Standard
Alignment:	Always chaotic evil
Advancement:	By character class
ECL:	+5

Aracholoths are terrible and vengeful creatures that hide in the darkness looking for prey. They hate drow with a passion and will band together with driders to hunt them down.

Aracholoths look like a half-mix of drow and drider. They appear humanoid, with four spider-like legs and a shiny black carapace. Their faces are particularly horrifying, with eight spider-eyes and two poisonous fangs.

Combat

Aracholoths are dangerous and terrifying creatures that try to horrify their opponents before descending upon them in melee. They typically pelt opponents with arrows from the darkness, then charge in with their gaze attack. They pursue any creature that flees.

Gaze (Su): *Cause fear* as if cast by a 3rd-level sorcerer, 30 feet, Will negates (DC 11).

Poison (Ex): Bite, Fortitude save (DC 13); initial and secondary damage 1d4 temporary Strength.

Spell-Like Abilities: 1/day—*dancing lights, darkness, faerie fire, suggestion,* and *web.* These abilities are as the spells cast by a 3rd-level sorcerer (save DC 11 + spell level).

Chwineka: The Test of Darkness

When a drow has shown ambition, drive, and a willingness to put herself before others, she has taken her first step onto Lolthtanchwi. She is now considered a zwy'il and is subject to the whims of her dark goddess. To the drow, this transition is known as Chwineka (chwee-NEHK-ah), or the Test of Darkness.

In some ways, this is the most terrifying of tests, because it comes seemingly at random and without warning. The zwy'il is inspected by Lolth to see if she is dark enough of heart to truly be a drow. To the drow, being dark of heart means being without mercy, filled with selfishness, and possessing a remarkable sense of superiority.

This chwi comes suddenly and always at a time in which the drow is performing some deed within view of other dark elves. The drow feels her heart swell with pride, power, and drive, tinged with a sensation of being watched from afar. If she gives any indication of self-doubt or unworthiness, a terrible pain clutches her heart. Without any warning, the zwy'il's body begins to convulse and transform. Her eyes blacken and grow to enormous proportions, while six smaller eyes emerge around her face. Two huge poisonous fangs emerge from the zwy'il's mouth. Lastly, an extra pair of spider-like legs grows from her torso. The drow has been transformed into an aracholoth—another monstrous creation of Lolth that is feared and persecuted by other drow (see the Aracholoth sidebar). Lolth hates all such transformed drow and takes pleasure in making them mere mockeries of spiders and drow, rather than true members of either species.

The Chwineka occurs when a drow has gained enough experience to advance to 2nd level.

Chwikezzar: The Test of Ambition

Surviving the Chwineka, the zwy'il has shown the sense of superiority necessary to advance in drow society. Lesser drow immediately give her deference in most social circumstances, although she must still be mindful of her place in the hierarchy. The zwy'il must now brace for the Chwikezzar (chwee-keh-ZAR), or Test of Ambition.

To those who study the insane logic of Lolth, Chwikezzar is seen as the simplest of the tests, because the natural drive, zeal, and urge to succeed that all drow possess is weighed by the Queen of Spiders. However, no one is ever sure

what amount is necessary to placate her desire. Zwy'il at this point commit horrid acts of murder, fraud, deception, and coercion to advance their place in society. This is tempered by the fact that all drow must continually be mindful of their place in that society. A drow can show tremendous energy in doing what it takes to succeed, but it only takes one wrong move to receive a poisoned dagger in the back—complements of a superior's assassin. The drow must place herself above others during this stage, wheeling and dealing, jostling for position at the expense of others.

The actual test is subtle. The zwy'il receives information from an anonymous source, spelling out an extremely profitable venture, but at great risk—the exact endeavor depends on the "business" that the drow is involved in. For example, a drow merchant might find a way to completely eliminate a competitor and raise the price of her goods but at the risk of angering a high-powered priestess. The information is correct, but it cannot be verified. If the zwy'il acts on this information and takes the risk, then she passes the test.

If the zwy'il hesitates or does not use the opportunity presented to her, then Lolth considers her unworthy of ambition. From that point on, almost everything the drow does is doomed to failure—business opportunities dry up, spells fail with alarming regularity, and she is inexplicably shunned by other drow. Eventually, the drow either goes into exile, goes mad, or is killed. When the drow fails the Chwikezzar, a tiny green spider is seen exiting the body.

In game terms, a drow that has failed the Chwikezzar suffers from a -6 effective decrease in Charisma (minimum 1) and a -4 enhancement penalty to attack rolls, saving throws, ability checks, and skill checks. These penalties can be removed by any non-Lolth-worshiping spellcaster casting *bestow curse, break enchantment, limited wish, miracle, remove curse,* or *wish* so long as the drow suffering the effects forswears Lolth. This test occurs at some point when the drow has gained enough experience to advance to 3rd, 4th, or 5th level.

Chwidridera: The Test of the Drider

The Chwidridera (chwee-dri-DERA), or the Test of the Drider, is the most infamous of the Punishments of Lolth. It is known outside of drow society, mainly because those who fail the test are transformed into the foul creatures known as driders. At this point, the drow has shown a high amount of aspiration, backstabbing, and conniving as she advances up the social ladder, but she walks a fine line between the "healthy" arrogance of a normal drow and megalomania, thinking that she is immune to her dark goddess's wrath.

When this aspect of the Lolthtanchwi begins, the drow has disturbing visions of her body being consumed from the inside by a mass of spiders. In a manner uncharacteristic for a drow, the zwy'il begins to avoid and fear spiders. Considering the amount of spiders and spider imagery that abounds in the cities of the drow, the zwy'il must confront this fear almost every waking second. Her paranoia increases, and she becomes convinced that every spider is waiting to sink its venomous fangs into her flesh. If the zwy'il can manage to overcome this irrational behavior, the fear abates, and her usual respect and admiration for spiders returns.

Those who fail this test do so by fleeing their community. Once this has happened, the zwy'il knows her fate is sealed. She is filled with an overwhelming sense of dread and foreboding, as

Spiderleg Horror
Large Aberration

Hit Dice:	12d8+60 (114 hp)
Initiative:	+7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)
Speed:	30 ft., 30 ft. burrow, 30 ft. climb
AC:	21 (+3 Dex, -1 size, +9 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 18
Attacks:	8 leg rakes +14 melee
Damage:	Leg 1d6+6
Face/Reach:	5 ft. by 10 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks:	Constrict, improved grab
Special Qualities:	Leg regeneration, tremorsense
Saves:	Fort +11, Ref +7, Will +11
Abilities:	Str 22, Dex 17, Con 20, Int 3, Wis 16, Cha 3
Skills:	Climb +15, Hide +7, Listen +8, Move Silently +10, Spot +8
Feats:	Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative
Climate/Terrain:	Underground
Organization:	Solitary, cluster (2-5), or colony (11-20)
Challenge Rating:	9
Treasure:	Standard
Alignment:	Always chaotic evil
Advancement:	10-13 HD (Large); 14-27 HD (Huge)
ECL:	+11

Spiderleg horrors lurk in caverns deep beneath the earth—a nearly mindless beast that searches out prey to strangle and devour. Spiderleg horrors look like a writhing mass of flexible, hairy spider legs. Each leg ends in a sharp tip, and one side is covered in thorn-like hair that can rip through flesh and bone with ease. Its central body is buried deep under its dozens of limbs and is usually seen only after the creature has been killed. A spiderleg horror moves in a skittering undulation, crawling up walls or burrowing through earth with ease.

Combat

Spiderleg horrors lurk in the darkness waiting for prey, hiding just beneath the surface of the earth or high on a cavern wall.

Improved Grab (Ex): If a spiderleg horror hits an opponent that is at least one size category smaller than itself with at least two leg attacks, it deals normal damage and attempts to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity (grapple bonus +14). If it gets a hold, it also constricts on the same round. Alternatively, the spiderleg horror has the option to use one leg to grapple the opponent (-20 penalty on grapple check, but the spiderleg horror is not considered grappled). In either case, each successful grapple check it makes during successive rounds automatically deals leg damage plus constrict damage.

Constrict (Ex): With a successful grapple check, a spiderleg horror can crush a grabbed opponent, dealing an extra 3d6 points of damage. This damage is considered bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage.

Leg Regeneration (Ex): Foes can attack a spiderleg horror's tentacles, but only when those appendages are actually holding an opponent. A leg has an AC of 23 (touch 14) and can withstand 20 points of damage. The loss of a leg does not harm the creature (that is, the damage does not apply against its hit point total), and it regrows the limb within a day.

Tremorsense (Ex): A spiderleg horror can automatically sense the location of anything within 60 feet that is in contact with the ground.

the visions of the spiders eating her alive fill her mind in their horrible vividness.

Nothing happens until the next time she rests. The visions return with a terrible intensity, and a single miniscule red spider appears and crawls into the zwy'il's mouth. Once the spider is inside, the drow goes through a grotesque and traumatic transformation during which she turns into a drider (see the *Monster Manual*).

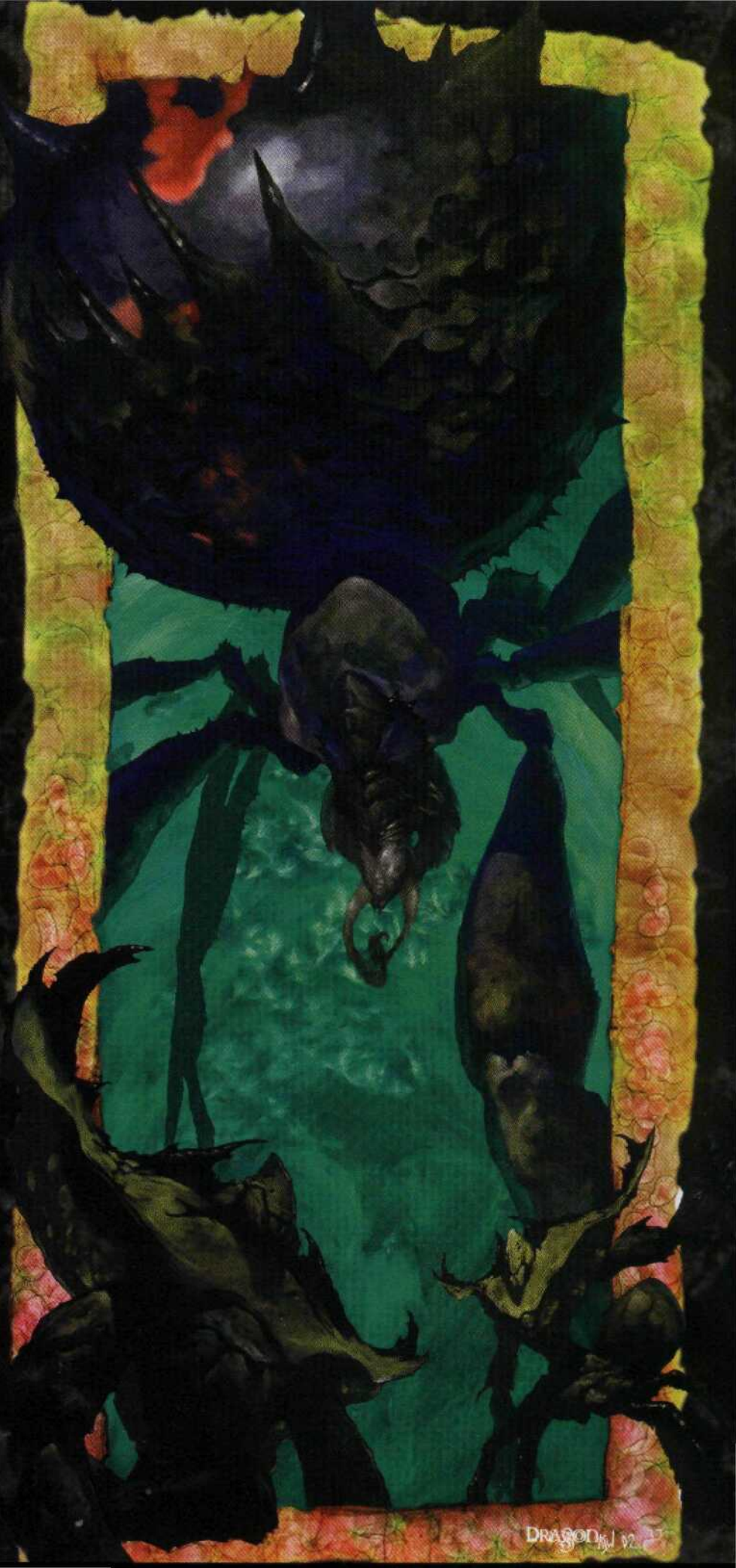
If horrified onlookers do not kill the drider, it flees into the Underdark, knowing that it can never return. Drow despise driders, recognizing that they are failures in the eyes of Lolth, and will do anything to see them destroyed. The drider's mind is twisted by the transformation, filled with an incredible hatred for the race to which it once belonged. Drow clerics tell that Lolth revels in this animosity and the chaos that is sown from the creation of one of these aberrations. The Chwidridera occurs when a drow has gained enough experience to advance to 6th level.

Chwiakrell–The Test of Lies

If the zwy'il manages to survive the dreaded Test of the Drider, she still has many challenges to face. The next test focuses on the zwy'il's status within drow society. Even the most secluded drow must have some interaction with her kin; even if just to threaten them into leaving her alone. For a drow who is more entrenched in the workings of her people, the web of intrigue and doublecrossing begins to tighten around her as she enters into the Chwiakrell (pronounced chwee-uh-KRELL), or Test of Lies.

The zwy'il must plant seeds of lies and deception, with the dual purposes of bringing down an enemy and propelling herself higher up the ladder of status. The lie can be small and subtle, so long as it ripples and grows to monstrous proportions. The lie must also be completely untrue, although the zwy'il can help the lie along by planting evidence and arranging compromising situations for the victim to be caught in.

The zwy'il knows the test has begun when she catches wind of a rumor about her that is completely untrue (possibly the result of another drow's Chwiakrell). A cocky zwy'il can fail her test immediately if she does nothing, but most go through tremendous effort to



quash the rumor (and the perpetrator) as quickly as possible. Clerics of Lolth believe that the Queen of Spiders whispers these lies into the ear of another drow to begin the test.

The zwy'il passes the test if her chosen victim is utterly humiliated and removed from her position of power, or (preferably) killed as a result of the lie. As mentioned above, the zwy'il fails the Chwiakrell if she does not respond to the lies about her. She also fails if her plan to bring down the victim does not have the desired effect. If irrefutable proof of innocence is presented to other drow, the zwy'il immediately fails the test.

Drow who fail this test become incapable of lying as though under the effects of a *zone of truth* spell. This effect can be removed by any non-Lolth-worshiping spellcaster casting *bestow curse, break enchantment, limited wish, miracle, remove curse,* or *wish* so long as the drow suffering the effects forswears Lolth. The Chwiakrell occurs when the drow has gained enough experience to advance to 7th or 8th level.

Chwidencha–The Test of Sacrifice

Having learned that the only person she can trust is herself, the zwy'il must now understand the meaning of sacrifice. The drow word for sacrifice (dencha) does not have quite the same meaning when it is translated in the Common tongue. For the drow, sacrifice equals loss without gaining anything in return. The concept of freely giving something to another without gaining any benefit in the process is completely alien to the drow mindset. During the Chwidencha, the zwy'il learns what this sacrifice truly means. Lolth is a greedy goddess and seeks to possess and consume anything that others have. By surviving this test, the zwy'il learns to prize her possessions and hoard anything of significance.

This test begins after the drow has gained something of importance. It is not necessarily a material item—an increase in status, a new skill or spell, or some advance in personal ability is likely, too. Shortly after the boon, the zwy'il catches sight of the spider messenger of Lolth, which appears on the object or representation of the trait that Lolth wants for herself. It might be a powerful magic item, a fabulous jewel, or even the zwy'il's hand. Whatever it is, the zwy'il immediately knows what the spider is indicating. Lolth never chooses something trivial—only something that has a close and powerful connection to the zwy'il suffices. In addition, the sacrifice is something that seriously hurts or reduces the drow in some way, whether through the loss of magical might, social status, mental facility, or a physical trait.

The zwy'il must decide if she willingly makes the sacrifice, and she must make the sacrifice within one week of the appearance of Lolth's messenger. In the case of an object, she must present it to another drow of equal or higher status, preferably a priestess of Lolth. If it is a skill, feat, or ability, the zwy'il experiences a wrenching vision that feels as though her soul is being torn apart, and she is drained of 1d4 x 200 XP. Some zwy'il are even commanded to sacrifice a part of their own bodies, such as an eye, foot, or ear.

If the zwy'il willingly goes through with the sacrifice, she passes the test. If she refuses to part with the chosen sacrifice, she fails, with terrible consequences. The next time the drow touches the treasured object or uses the

Brood Mother

Large Aberration

Hit Dice:	18d8+90 (171 hp)
Initiative:	+7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)
Speed:	40 ft., 30 ft. climb
AC:	21 (+3 Dex, -1 size, +12 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 18
Attacks:	Bite +14 melee
Damage:	Bite 4d6+12 and poison
Face/Reach:	20 ft. by 20 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks:	Poison, spell-like abilities, web
Special Qualities:	Immunities, SR 25
Saves:	Fort +11, Ref +9, Will +14
Abilities:	Str 27, Dex 17, Con 20, Int 6, Wis 16, Cha 16
Skills:	Climb +17, Concentration +10, Listen +10, Spot +10
Feats:	Alertness, Combat Casting, Improved Initiative
Climate/Terrain:	Underground
Organization:	Solitary or brood (1 brood mother, 10-20 Small monstrous spiders, 1-10 Large monstrous spiders, 1-6 Huge monstrous spiders)
Challenge Rating:	14
Treasure:	Standard
Alignment:	Always chaotic evil
Advancement:	19-36 HD (Gargantuan); 37-54 HD (Colossal)
ECL:	+11

A brood mother looks like an enormous black widow spider with a tormented drow head. It does not have any hands, but it does have two deceptively strong, feathery antennae close to its face that can grasp and use objects.

Like driders, brood mothers are outcasts from drow society and are ruthlessly hunted down when found. Brood mothers prefer to be left alone, content to spawn huge numbers of monstrous spiders from the victims caught in her webs.

Combat

Brood mothers prefer to fight from behind a shield of their monstrous spider kin.

Immunities (Ex): Brood mothers are immune to webs (they cannot be caught in a spider's web or a *web* spell), poisons, and mind-affecting effects.

Poison (Ex): Bite, Fortitude save (DC 24); initial damage 2d6 Constitution, secondary damage death.

The poison injected by a brood mother is actually a tiny egg in a fluid that causes rapid growth of the egg under the right conditions. The bodies of creatures killed by a brood mother's poison burst apart as a monstrous spider, already grown to maturity, is born to the world. The birthed spider's size is dependent on the size of the creature it was born from. The monstrous spider born is always one size category smaller than the creature that gave it birth. Thus, an ogre killed by a brood mother's poison would give birth to a Medium-size monstrous spider. When a creature succeeds at the second saving throw against the brood mother's poison, its body has nullified the growth liquid and killed the egg.

Spell-Like Abilities: 3/day—*dancing lights, darkness, deeper darkness, detect chaos, detect evil, detect good, detect law, detect magic,* and *faerie fire.* Caster level 14th; save DC 13 + spell level.

Web (Ex): Brood mothers spin webs as monstrous spiders. They may cast a web eight times per day. This is similar to an attack with a net, but it has a maximum range of 50 feet with a range increment of 10 feet and is effective against targets of Huge or smaller size (see Chapter 7 of the *Player's Handbook* for details on net attacks). The web anchors the target in place, allowing no movement.

An entangled creature can escape with a successful Escape Artist check (DC 30) or burst it with a Strength check (DC 36). Both are standard actions. The web has 16 hit points. See the monstrous spider entry in Appendix 2 of the *Monster Manual* for more information about webs.

ability Lolth desired, she transforms into a spiderleg horror (see the Spiderleg Horror sidebar). The Chwidencha occurs when the drow has gained enough experience to advance to 9th, 10th, or 11th level.

Chwidevbrii–The Test of Betrayal

Chwidevbrii, or the Test of Betrayal, is a punishment that strikes deep. As the zwy'il has progressed through the various trials and tribulations of Lolth, she has gained powerful allies as well as powerful enemies. Although trust is a distasteful concept to most drow, they understand that sometimes it does happen and is even necessary. The Test of Betrayal teaches the zwy'il that she can only trust one person—herself.

To succeed at this test, the zwy'il must betray someone who has garnered her trust or in whom she has placed her trust. Mentors, teachers, leaders, friends, and family members are all fair game, as long as there has been a solid connection of dependence made in the past. The relationship between master and slave or servant does not count; Lolth knows that betrayal is inherent in such a relationship. The victim must also be on roughly the same (or higher) social step as the zwy'il—murdering a trusted stable hand means nothing to the Queen of Spiders.

The zwy'il must utterly destroy the other drow in a way that allows her to advance in some manner. The method is not important: Blackmail, slander, and theft are commonly used. In the end, the victim must die. Usually, the victim is murdered by the zwy'il herself, commits suicide, or is killed by a third party as a result of the zwy'il's slander campaign.

The Chwidevbrii begins when the drow's attention is drawn to a peculiar black spider with a dagger-like marking on its back. This occurs in the presence of the victim, who is oblivious to its presence. Once the victim has been chosen, nothing can change it, and the result is either a ruinous end for the victim or for the zwy'il—the zwy'il succeeds when the victim is dead. If it takes an unusually long time for the plan to manifest or if the zwy'il attacks the victim but does not kill her, she fails the test.

Punishment for failure results in having the target retaliate against the zwy'il. If the target does not immediately succeed, she gains a supernatural ability to hunt down the zwy'il, and it is just a matter of time before the failed drow is lying dead at her feet. If the zwy'il manages to eliminate the target after this point, the test is still considered a failure, and a family member, servant, or other ally takes up the pursuit of the failure. As in the other tests, a tiny spider is sometimes seen exiting the mouth of the corpse of the failed zwy'il.

When a drow fails this test, the target gains the ability to find the zwy'il at will using *discern location* (as though cast by a sorcerer of the zwy'il's level). The target retains this ability until the zwy'il is dead or until Lolth deems a different drow must take up the quest.

The Chwidevbrii occurs at some point after a drow has gained 12th level and before the drow has gained 15th level.

Chwihendrell–The Test of Domination

Having dispatched a drow ally in the last test, the zwy'il must now prove that she is capable of ruling lesser beings by leading her people to dominate non-drow. This is known as Chwihendrell (pronounced chwee-hen-DRELL), or the Test of Domination.

Chwihendrell begins when a spider messenger draws the zwy'il's attention toward a non-drow being. This could be as direct as seeing the spider crawling along the tunic of a duergar slave in the streets, or as abstract as watching it crawl across a map, where it settles on a territory known for its infestation of illithids. To the zwy'il, the meaning is clear: The chosen race must be destroyed.

To pass the test, the zwy'il must raise an army (or elite team) and mount an assault on a significant population of the chosen race. The goal is elimination and/or enslavement, down to every man, woman, and child. The population must be the equivalent to a small town (see Chapter 4: Adventures in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*), although this amount can be spread out over numerous individuals, thorps, hamlets, and villages.

Unlike the other tests, the Chwihendrell does not have a set time limit. The test can take years to complete if the enemy proves particularly tenacious or has a large population. Certain hard-to-find races, like the kuo-toa, can be maddeningly difficult to eradicate, which suits the twisted humor of Lolth.

Failure is also arbitrary. If Lolth believes the zwy'il has taken too long to meet her goal or the enemy manages to regroup and mount a significant counterattack, the zwy'il fails the test. This awareness comes suddenly, along with a sensation of abandonment and despair. Over the course of a few minutes, her body undergoes a transformation similar to that experienced during the Test of the Drider. Instead of becoming a drider, however, the failed drow is transformed into a brood mother (see the Brood Mother sidebar).

The brood mother is a source of many of the different species of monstrous spiders that roam the darkness of the subterranean world. It is "born" pregnant and spawns many

For Your Character

If you like what you see in this article, show it to your DM and ask her if you can play a drow. If your DM is interested in running a whole campaign set in the Underdark, she also might allow you to play one of the other monsters presented in this article.

One of the reasons you might be allowed to play a drow is if your DM allows you to play evil characters. Only neutral or evil characters dedicated to Lolth should have to endure the Lolthtanchwi. If your DM doesn't already allow evil PCs, ask her to look at the *Book of Vile Darkness*, releasing in October, and *Dragon* #300 for advice on how to run games with evil PCs and for advice for you on how to play them.

For Your Campaign

If you have no drow PCs who would go through these tests, you can still get a lot of use from this article:

- The monsters provided here make great additions to any campaign, whether or not it involves drow and the Underdark.
- Perhaps a drow going through these tests focuses on the PCs for the Chwisasshra or Chwidevbrii. If the drow fails, Lolth grants the PCs the ability to hunt down their foe.
- Perhaps the PCs are in a city attacked by a drow going through the Chwihendrel. If they fend off the attack, they must deal with the brood mother the drow turns into.

In campaigns in which some or all of the PCs are playing drow, the Lolthtanchwi presents interesting challenges and opportunities for those involved.

- If your players playing drow PCs would rather not incur the extra risks, these tests can occur between adventures as background material. You can describe in exacting, horrifying detail what terrible events the drow endures to pass onto the next level. This should be done privately, so that none of the other players are aware of what changes in his personality has occurred.
- As an alternate method, you might have the player make a saving throw to see if her character survives a chwi. Have the player make a single Will, Fortitude, or Reflex save (her choice), with the DC equal to 10 + the level that the character is trying to attain. Success indicates the zwy'il lives, and failure means that she suffers the fate described for that level.
- If you run a more drow oriented campaign, try actually running the tests as part of adventures. Some players will object to such an arbitrary way of having their character killed or transformed, so the DM should make it known well ahead of time what rules for drow PCs are in effect.

spiders during its lifetime. The brood mother injects other creatures with its offspring, killing the injected victim and giving birth to its children. These spiders are likely to kill the drow's enemies at some point, and in Lolth's twisted logic, she accomplishes her extermination goals by creating more brood mothers.

The Chwihendrell occurs after the drow has gained enough experience to advance to 15th level.

Chwisasshra–The Test of Vengeance

The zwy'il is now ready to face the Chwisasshra, or Test of Vengeance. Just as in the Test of Betrayal, when the drow brought down a trusted friend, the Chwisasshra demands that she utterly destroy a sworn enemy. Considering the treacherous life that most drow live, the zwy'il probably has a large supply of enemies.

Unlike the other tests, subtlety is not allowed. The zwy'il must bring every resource at her disposal to the task of wiping out her chosen enemy. The destruction must be absolute, including the elimination of the enemy's immediate family, household staff, and residence.

This test is extremely dangerous, not only for the violence that is required, but also for the wrath of the target's allies. The test begins when the zwy'il sees the tiny spider that has appeared so many times before. It shows itself at a time when the zwy'il visibly sees the target or in some other abstract way (for example, spinning a web on the enemy's house banner). From that point on, the target can never change.

Once the target has been revealed, the zwy'il must eventually attack her and her household. This is usually done with the help of the zwy'il's minions and troops. The zwy'il is forbidden to use a third party to assassinate the target, and she immediately fails if she does so–Lolth demands that the zwy'il spill the blood of her enemy directly. If the target is killed, the zwy'il must continue the rampage, looting, desecrating, and destroying her foe's home as well.

If the zwy'il launches an assault and does not succeed in eliminating the target, the test is considered a failure. If the zwy'il is not killed during the attack, she must contend with a rightfully angry enemy. As in the Test of Betrayal, the hunter becomes the hunted, but in addition to gaining the ability to find the zwy'il at will using *discern location*, the

Proxy of Lolth
Female choldrith† demigod (divine rank 1)†† Clr16; CR 25; Large aberration; HD 20d8+60; hp 220; Init +8; Spd 120 ft., climb 120 ft.; AC 37 (touch 18, flat-footed 34); Atk +21 melee (2d4+7 and poison, bite); or +24/+19/+14/+9 (1d4+9/19-20, *+4 ghost touch chaotic shocking burst dagger*); Face/Reach 5 ft. by 10 ft./10 ft.; SA Poison, cleric spells, spell-like abilities, web; SQ Damage reduction 36/+4, spell resistance 33, fire resistance 21, divine checks, immunities, control creatures (drow), immortal, divine senses, portfolio sense, automatic actions, create magic items, divine aura, spontaneous casting, communication, domain powers; AL CE; SV Fort +18, Ref +16, Will +25; Str 20, Dex 19, Con 17, Int 15, Wis 21, Cha 18.

Skills and Feats: Balance +19, Climb +23, Concentration +18, Hide +20, Jump +20, Knowledge (religion) +17, Spellcraft +17; Combat Casting, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Quicken Spell, Spell Penetration, Weapon Focus (bite).

Poison (Ex): Bite, Fortitude save (DC 23); initial and secondary damage 3d6 temporary Constitution.

Spell-like Abilities: At will–any Chaos, Evil, or Destruction domain spell (as if by an 11th-level sorcerer); At will–*teleport without error* (as if by a 20th-level sorcerer; additional weight limited to 100 pounds); 2/day–*darkness, bless* (as if by a 20th-level sorcerer).

Web (Ex): Choldriths spin webs as monstrous spiders. They can cast a web eight times a day. This is similar to an attack with a net but has a maximum range of 50 feet, with a range increment of 10 feet, and is effective against targets of Medium-size or smaller. The web anchors targets in place.

Divine Checks: A proxy of Lolth does not automatically fail attack rolls and saving throws on a roll of 1. The proxy of Lolth gains its divine rank as a bonus to all skill checks, ability checks, caster level checks, and turning checks.

Immunities: Immune to polymorphing, petrification, energy drain, ability drain, ability damage, mind-affecting effects, disease, poison, stunning, paralysis, disintegration, death effects, electricity, and cold.

Control Creatures (Drow): A proxy of Lolth may attempt to dominate a drow once per day (Will save, DC 16).

Immortal: A proxy of Lolth does not age, nor does she need to eat, sleep, or breathe.

Divine Senses: A proxy of Lolth's senses extend to 1 mile. As a standard action, she can sense anything up to 1 mile from the location of a worshiper, shrine, or artifact dedicated to Lolth. She can extend her senses to up to two locations in this manner, and as a standard action, a proxy of Lolth can block the senses of deities of divine rank 1 or lower in a one mile radius at up to two locations.

Portfolio Sense: A proxy of Lolth automatically knows of any event that involves one thousand or more drow.

Automatic Actions: A proxy of Lolth can use the Knowledge (arcana) or Hide skill as a free action, and she can perform 2 such free actions per round.

Create Magic Items: A proxy of Lolth can create any light or medium armor, simple or martial weapons, items that create darkness, divination items, and items that disguise the user as long as the item's price does not exceed 4,500 gp.

Divine Aura: Each round, as a free action, a proxy of lolth can choose to cause nearby creatures to be dazed or shaken, or she can grant allies a +4 morale bonus to attack rolls, saves, and checks and grant foes a -4 morale penalty to attack rolls, saves, and checks. This supernatural effect is a 10-foot-radius emanation. A Will save (DC 16) negates.

Grant Spells: Although empowered to grant spells to those who pray to them, proxies usually direct those prayers to the deity they serve.

Spontaneous Casting: A proxy of Lolth can spontaneously cast any cleric spell. This works like the cleric ability to spontaneously cast cure spells.

Communication: A proxy of Lolth can speak and understand any language, and she can speak to any being within 1 mile. She can also speak at any location within 1 mile of any worshiper of Lolth.

Domain Powers: Cast chaos spells at +1 caster level; cast evil spells at +1 caster level; smite 1/day.

Spells Prepared (6/8/7/7/7/7/5/5/5/5; base DC = 15 + spell level): 0–*inflict minor wounds* (3), *resistance* (2), *virtue*; 1st–*cause fear, command* (2), *doom, endure elements, entropic shield, protection from law**, *random action*; 2nd–*bull's strength, desecrate**, *hold person* (2), *inflict moderate wounds* (2), *silence*; 3rd–*bestow curse* (2), *blindness/deafness* (2), *deeper darkness* (2), *magic circle against law**; 4th–*chaos hammer**, *dimensional anchor, inflict critical wounds* (3), *poison* (2); 5th–*dispel law**, *ethereal jaunt, flame strike, insect plague, slay living* (3), *true seeing*; 6th–*blade barrier* (2), *create undead**, *greater dispelling* (2); 7th–*destruction* (3), *greater restoration, word of chaos**; 8th–*antimagic field, cloak of chaos**, *discern location, earthquake* (2); 9th–*gate, energy drain* (3), *summon monster IX**.

*Domain spell. Deity: Lolth. Domains: Chaos (cast evil spells at +1 caster level), Evil (cast evil spells at +1 caster level).

Possessions: *+4 ghost touch chaotic shocking burst dagger, +4 shadow heavy fortification full plate, ring of protection +5, cloak of resistance +4, ring of evasion, cube of force.*

†The choldrith is described in the *Monster Compendium: Monsters of Faerun*. You do not need that book to run the proxy of Lolth as its powers and abilities are fully described here.

††The abilities of demigods and proxies are more fully described in *Deities and Demigods*, but you should be able to use the proxy of Lolth with all the information presented here. Note that all the proxy's abilities but spellcasting cannot be dispelled or suppressed, and they do not go away in an *antimagic field*.

zwy'il's enemy gains the ability to *planeshift* or *teleport without error* (as though cast by a sorcerer of the zwy'il's level) to the location of the zwy'il at will. Lolth revokes this ability if the zwy'il's enemy uses it for a purpose other than revenge, and should the zwy'il succeed in defeating that enemy, Lolth grants the abilities to a different enemy of the zwy'il.

The Chwisasshra occurs after the drow has gained enough experience to advance to 17th level.

Chwilolth–The Test of Lolth

The zwy'il is now reaching the pinnacle of her existence. She has overcome incredible odds and proven that she possesses the "best" traits that drow admire: uncompromising will, unbelievable cruelty, and an utter sense of superiority. One more test remains, however—Chwilolth, or the Test of Lolth. Having bested her enemies, the zwy'il must face down a representative of the Spider Goddess herself.

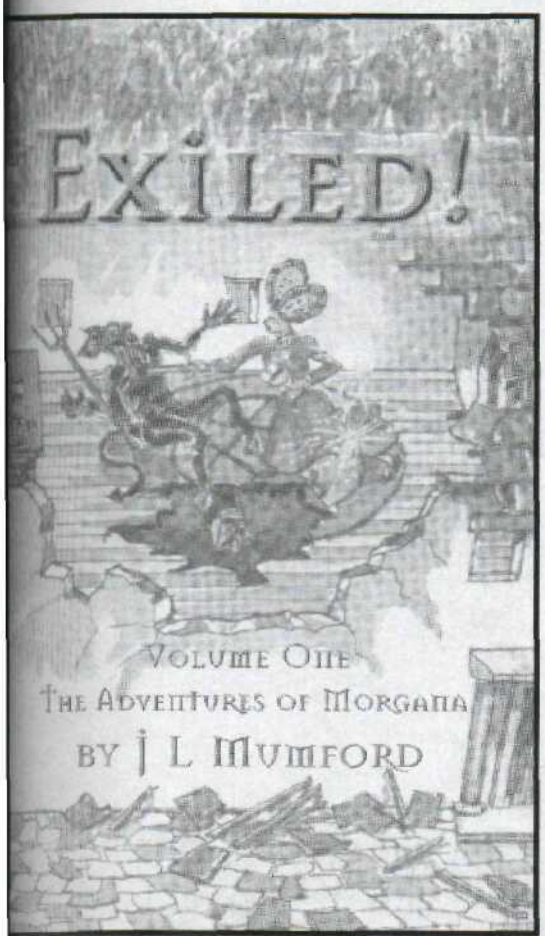
The test begins with visions. The zwy'il has a persistent vision of Lolth speaking to her. Lolth taunts, berates, and belittles the zwy'il in as many ways as possible, degrading her victories and revealing her weaknesses. The visions continue over the course of several weeks. Deprived of sleep (or, more accurately, the restful meditation that all elves require), the zwy'il starts seeing hallucinations. Visions of the Spider Goddess fill every moment of her life.

The visions abruptly stop one day, and the zwy'il now knows that she must face Lolth. The next time that she is alone, she hears the sound of skittering claws behind her. When she turns, she sees a monstrosity lurking before her—a proxy of Lolth, complete with the head of a beautiful drow maiden jutting out from a repulsive spider body. She states, "It is time," before leaping in to feast on the zwy'il's body. See the Proxy of Lolth sidebar for the proxy's statistics.

The zwy'il must fight for her life. She can use any and all means available to him, including weapons, magic items, spells, and traps. Although drow are taught that they must fight this battle alone, only a fool would do so. Most drow bring all the forces at their command against the proxy, often sacrificing much of their power to bring down the deadly divine being.

If the zwy'il defeats the proxy of Lolth, she passes the test. The reward for passing is greater than mere survival. Zwy'il who pass the test are allowed to advance beyond 20th level, never to be tested by Lolth again. Drow who reach 30th level are sometimes called to become proxies of Lolth themselves. They then have the opportunity to defend their positions by eliminating ambitious drow during future Chwiloths. For information on advancing beyond 20th level, see the *Epic Level Handbook*. For information on creating proxies, see *Deities and Demigods*.

Otherwise, the proxy kills the zwy'il. Zwy'il killed by the proxy cannot be raised, reincarnated, or resurrected by any means. The clerics of Lolth say that the souls of zwy'il who fail the test are taken back to Lolth and slowly consumed. The Chwilolth occurs when the drow has gained enough experience to advance to 19th or 20th level.



Lady Morgana is the only daughter of a heroic and wealthy knight in the Kingdom of Foix, sister to Arthur. She is expected to "marry well", in order to further the power and prestige of the Lefey family. With this in mind, her ambitious and unscrupulous Stetian Uncle Quixano teaches her the convoluted politics of Morval Earth. His wizard also enables her to use her illegal magic powers. Meanwhile, Morgana, irked by the constrictions put on mere females in Foix, daydreams of being a "Lady Errant". She envies her heroes, the "Doughty Knights of Renown". They go on Quests, rescue damsels in distress and fight goblins and demons, in the eternal war between Law and Chaos. In *Exiled!*, the first in the trilogy, a tragic roll of the dice, resulting in a most unexpected death, propels her forward into a chain of dramatic events that soon force her to do all of these things with considerable energy and courage.

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AT THE TABLE:

Monster Tokens

New monsters keep encounters interesting and keep the players guessing, but it's hard to find miniatures or even monster tokens for brand new monsters. We couldn't deside whether to provide monster tokens or the great Cave of Pain battlemat that came with this issue, so you get both. Just head to the nearest color photocopier and bedevil your players with these threats from the Underdark. These do-it-yourself tokens include monsters from three of this month's articles, "The Punishments of Lolth," the *Living Greyhawk Journal*, and "The Ashen Compact."

The *Dragon* staff is always looking for ways to build a more useful magazine, if you have comments on this, or any of the other ideas in this issue, chime in on the *Dragon* message boards at **www.wizards.com.**

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MIND FLAYER

DUERGAR

KUO-TOA

TROGLODYTE

GRIMLOCK

SKUM

DROW

DROW

SPIDER

SPIDER

DROW

DROW

SPIDER

BUGBEAR

MIND FLAYER SCIENTIST

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Sinister Tools

New Equipment from the Underdark

by Eric Cagle · illustrated by Mike May

The drow have a well-deserved reputation as cold-blooded murderers, torturers, and sadists. They delight in seeing others in pain, including those of their own race. Because of this fascination with torment, the drow have become experts in creating items, poisons, drugs, and weapons that inflict excruciating pain, mind-blasting insanity, or both.

Like any other race, the drow take advantage of the resources available in their surroundings. Mushrooms, moss, algae, fungi, and the bizarre animal species found in the Underdark serve as the baseline for countless thousands of odd and dangerous items and poisons. Because of their close association with their sinister goddess, Lolth, drow also make extensive use of spiders and have catalogued a dizzying array of ways to take advantage of them.

Here are some specialized items that might be found in the hands of the drow. Players should remember that the concepts of mercy, fairness, and honor are as alien to the drow as the surface dwellers that invade their Underdark fortresses.

Alchemical Items

Although not normally known for their alchemical skills, some drow have created items of note. In almost all cases, these items make use of various ingredients found only in the blackness of the Underdark.

Shriek Paste: The shrieker, a common fungus found in the bowels of the Underdark, is sometimes cultivated by drow societies, creating a first line of defense against intrusion around their cities. In addition, drow alchemists harvest and render the fungus down to a base substance capable of reproducing the shrieker's howl.

Shriek paste is an oily, smelly substance with a slightly purplish color. When smeared on a surface, it retains its same consistency almost indefinitely. When the paste is exposed to a light source equivalent to torchlight or greater, it rapidly crystallizes. During this process, the paste makes a high-pitched screeching noise, making it a useful signaling device. The shriek is loud and easy to hear (Listen DC -10, modified as usual for distance, solid barriers, and other environmental factors.) This sound lasts for 1 round before the paste dries up entirely and is rendered inert.

Flashstone: Some houses of drow have not laid eyes on a surface dweller in many generations, so they have forgotten that not everyone can see perfectly well in the gloom of the Underdark. Other clans have had to deal with repeated incursions from above and have come up with several ways to deal with them.

The flashstone is a hard, shiny pellet that glistens in light and glows slightly under both normal vision and darkvision. It is the same size and shape as a sling bullet, and it is used in a sling as often as it is thrown. When a flashstone strikes a hard surface, it vaporizes instantly, releasing a blast of light (15-foot-diameter circle). Creatures caught in the blast must make Fortitude saves (DC 16) or be blinded for 1 round. Once the 1-round blindness has passed, the creature suffers a -2 penalty to Spot and Search checks for one hour while its eyes recover.

Some drow torturers enjoy using flashstones in conjunction with conventional techniques, conditioning the victim to equate bright light with pain.

Blackwater: The Underdark is filled with dozens of lakes, rivers, and even entire seas, which in turn are filled with numerous aquatic species that have never glimpsed the harsh light of the sun. Kuo-toas, rogue bands of sahuagin, lost tribes of sea elves, and other strange and exotic races swim the blackened waters. The drow despise any challenge to their rule below the earth and view these aquatic races as adversaries to be decimated.

Long ago, a small city of drow began to prosper along the banks of an immense underground lake. However, the lake also hosted a substantial kuo-toan settlement. Clashes between the drow and kuo-toas were common, with the kuo-toas raiding the fragile ships that the drow were using to cross the lake. The attacks became more bold when the kuo-toas realized that without crossing the lake, the drow were trapped—there were no other tunnels leading out of the city.

Salvation for the drow came in the form of a young alchemist who created a vile concoction, which he dubbed blackwater. When dumped into water, blackwater immediately eliminates the oxygen, suffocating most aquatic beings that are caught in its area. The drow "navy" commissioned the alchemist to create as much of the substance as possible. Barrel after barrel of blackwater was dumped into the lake, which had the desired effect of eliminating any kuo-toas that dared to venture close to the surface. Unfortunately, the poison also eliminated most of the fish, crustaceans, and other wildlife that the city was dependent on for food. For a few desperate months, the drow clung to survival while ships went to other cities and bartered for food.

For his efforts, the alchemist was murdered in his sleep to ensure that the knowledge of blackwater would not spread beyond the city. However, this plan failed, and soon other drow became aware of the potent concoction.

A single vial of blackwater rapidly affects a 10 foot by 10 foot cube of water. Any aquatic creature that breathes blackwater must make a

Alchemy Items

Item	Creation DC	Cost
Shriek Paste	20	50 gp
Flashstone	20	30 gp
Blackwater	25	100 gp

Poisons

Poison	Type	Initial Damage	Secondary Damage	Craft (Poison-making) DC	Cost
Chakar Root	Ingested DC 16	Paralysis*	2d6 Dex	17	750 gp
Ebon Fungus	Inhaled DC 15	1 Cha	2d6 Cha	15	500 gp
Dessicator Poison	Contact DC 19	3d6 Con/ (1d2 Con*)	3d6 Con/ (–)	25	2,750 gp

* See poison description.

Constitution check (DC 10) each round or begin to drown (see Chapter 3: Running the Game, the Drowning Rule, in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). The DC for this check increases by 1 on each subsequent round. The creature can also try to "hold its breath" (as a creature going underwater would normally do), using the rules from the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. Blackwater affects creatures that can breathe underwater due to a spell or effect, such as *water breathing*, but has no effect on creatures that can only breathe air.

Poison

The Underdark is host to numerous species of plants, fungi, molds, and other sources of terrible poisons. The drow have identified several unique toxins that are derived from these spores, mushrooms, and animals.

The creation of poisons is an art taught to almost every drow. Being able to identify and use poisons is crucial in the murderous world of the drow, and one who does not learn poison's secrets is doomed to become a victim to them.

Chakar Root: Chakar is a strange and beautiful plant that produces fragrant blooms and emits a glow visible only to those using darkvision. While the plant is admired for its unsettling beauty, the roots of the plant have proven the most prized part by drow assassins. Chakar root has a light, pleasant taste, and it is commonly mixed into the victim's food. When ingested, chakar causes a warm and pleasant sensation that runs throughout the entire body. However, if the victim fails her Fortitude save (DC 16), she becomes paralyzed. This paralysis lasts for 1d3 hours. The root continues to attack the body, and a minute after its initial ingestion, the victim must make a second save or suffer 2d6 points of Dexterity damage.

Ebon Fungus: Feared even by the drow, ebon fungus is commonly found near pools of water that are completely devoid of life. Animals that stumble into a patch of ebon fungus begin to become withdrawn, lethargic, and disinterested in the world around them. If left unattended, the animal soon dies from ennui, refusing to even seek food or water. Drow collect this substance and use it against enemies that they want to see humiliated and withered before being destroyed.

Ebon fungus attacks in two different ways. First, creatures that inhale the spores feel a loss of self-confidence and worth, eventually causing a spiraling depression. Second, the fungus spreads throughout the victim's body, covering his skin with a fuzzy black substance.

Slaves usually collect this substance, as few drow willingly expose themselves to the dangers of this fungus. It is then ground into a fine black powder.

Desiccator Poison: The result of a successful use of the *dessicator*—a gruesome torture device devised by the drow (see below) — is a viscous substance that contains the vital essence of a sentient being. By combining this essence with a mixture of monstrous spider toxin, drow alchemists have learned how to make extremely deadly poisons that target specific races. It requires an Alchemy check (DC 20) instead of the normal Craft (poisonmaking) skill check to create a single vial of desiccator poison. Failure indicates that the ingredients have been wasted, necessitating another use of the *dessicator*.

Dessicator poison is tailored for a specific race. It is a contact poison (DC 19) that causes 3d6 initial Constitution damage and 3d6 secondary Constitution damage if used against a member of the same race that was used to make the desiccator poison (see the *dessicator* description below). If the poison comes into contact with a different race, it is not nearly as effective (1d2 initial Constitution damage, no secondary damage).

Drow assassins enjoy using this poison when stalking specific prey. Although expensive, drow delight in knowing that the pain and torment of one victim was used to cause the death of another.

Drugs

The drow have no compunctions about the use, transport, or sale of drugs. Some drow have even created financial empires based on the sale of rare, difficult to find drugs, catering to both surface dwellers and other drow. Drow commonly feed drugs to their slaves, lowering their willpower, improving their capacity for work, or turning them into drooling puppets that the drow can use for some twisted pleasure.

For more information on drugs, see *Lords of Darkness* or the upcoming *Book of Vile Darkness*.

Fezrah ("Spiderblind")

Description: This pitch-black fungus has numerous fuzzy white spots and produces an odor that is repulsive to any sort of vermin, particularly spiders. When these spore-filled spots are harvested and ingested, the user produces a scent that vermin cannot stand.

Type: Ingested DC 9.

Initial Effect: None.

Secondary Effect: The user exudes a scent that is repulsive to vermin of any type (including monstrous). Vermin must make a Fortitude save (DC 11) to move within 5 feet of the user. If the user moves within 5 feet of vermin, those vermin must make a Fortitude save (DC 11) or back away at least 5 feet on their next action. This effect lasts for 1 hour.

Price: 50 gp

Side Effects: The user becomes mildly paranoid, and his attitude toward other creatures can never improve past indifferent (see NPC Attitudes, Chapter 5: Campaigns in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).

Overdose: If more than a single dose is taken in a 24-hour period, fezrah acts as a poison—DC 11, initial and secondary damage 1d2 Strength.

Addiction: Low.

Chiff

Description: This mineral is found in tiny deposits deep in the Underdark, commonly near iron and silver. It is a chalky white substance with a distinctly metallic tang when smelled. Chiff grants the user a sense of superiority and a desire to see blood spilled. The gladiator-slaves of the drow commonly use it as well as drow who know they will be going into battle.

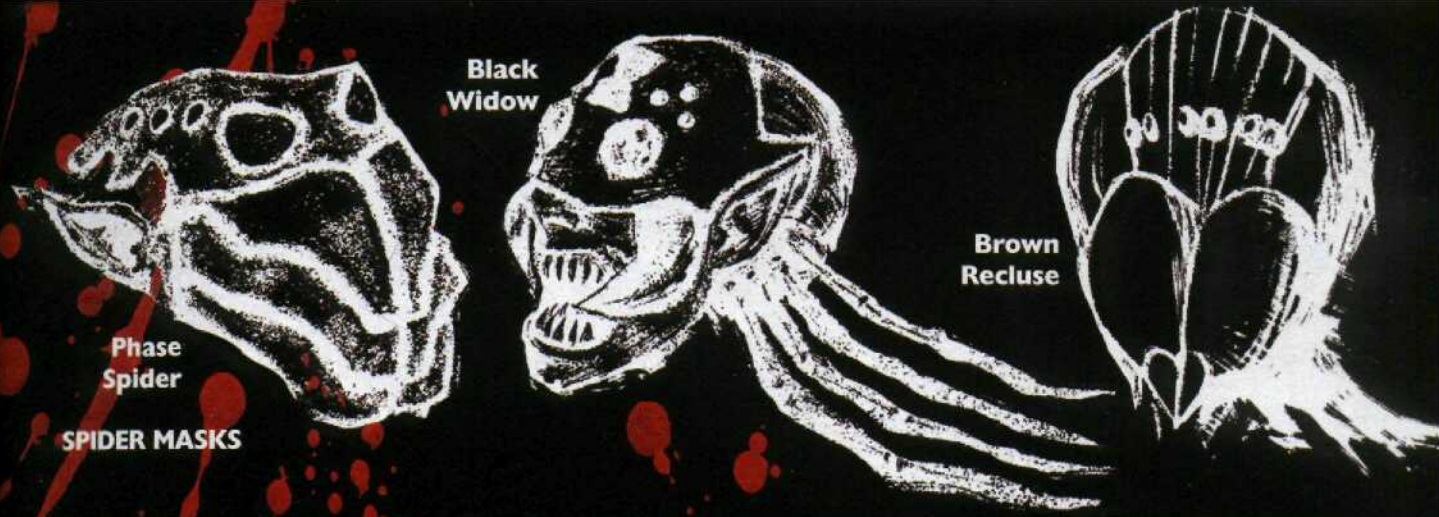
Type: Inhaled DC 17.

Initial Effect: Chiff fills the user with a sense of invulnerability, confidence, and bloodlust. The user gains the ability to Rage (as the barbarian class ability) once during the duration of the drug (or to rage one additional time if the user already has the rage ability). The effects last for 1d3 hours.

Secondary Effect: Chiff is a potent stimulant, and the user gains a temporary +2 alchemical bonus to her Dexterity.

Price: 300 gp

Side Effects: When the secondary effect ends, the user is extremely lethargic and uncaring. The user



SPIDER MASKS

suffers a -6 penalty to Dexterity and becomes fatigued.

Overdose: If more than one dose of chiff is taken in a 24-hour period, the user suffers 1d4 points of Wisdom damage and acts as if under the effect of a *confusion* spell for 2d4 minutes. Using it three or more times within a 24 hour period causes 2d4 points of Wisdom damage and the user is confused as the spell *confusion* for 2d4 hours.

Addiction: High.

Magic Items

Drow make extensive use of magic items of all kinds, and only the lowliest servants or warriors do not own at least one magic item. Listed here are some of the bizarre and dangerous magic items that the drow have created for their perverted goals.

Spider Masks

Found only in the possession of high-ranking clerics of Lolth, these terrible masks grant great power, but they extract a terrible price upon the wearer. Once donned, the mask fuses itself to the wearer's face and cannot be removed short of use of a *limited wish, wish,* or *miracle.* Even if the mask is successfully removed in this manner, the person must make a Fortitude save (DC 25) or be instantly killed by the fury of Lolth. Seeing such a mask, most drow immediately treat the wearer with a great deal of respect. There are three known types of masks:

Brown Recluse: This dull brown mask completely covers the wearer's head, with only eight black eyes and two huge hairy fangs breaking the surface. The wearer gains the following abilities:

- +4 profane bonus to Spot and Listen checks.
- *Jump* and *spider climb* at will.
- The wearer gains the ability to make a single bite attack each round. This bite deals 1d6 damage and injects a terrible poison that begins to rot the wearer's flesh. Fortitude save (DC 18); 2d6 initial and secondary Constitution damage.

Phase Spider: This mask resembles that of a phase spider: white and blue, with eight silvery white eyes. The wearer gains the following abilities:

- +2 profane bonus to Spot, Search, and Listen checks.
- The wearer gains the ability to make a single bite attack each round. This bite deals 1d6 damage and poison. Fortitude save (DC 13); 1d6 initial and secondary Constitution damage.
- As a move-equivalent action, the wearer can shift from the Ethereal Plane to the Material Plane. Shifting back to the Ethereal Plane also takes a move-equivalent action. The ability is otherwise identical to the *ethereal jaunt* spell as cast by a 9th-level cleric. The wearer can shift between the planes any number of times per day.

Black Widow: This mask is midnight-black, with the distinctive red hourglass shape of the black widow spider located on the forehead. Unlike the other masks listed here, the wearer's mouth is visible, although it looks like he possesses huge, spider-like fangs. Eight small spider eyes are scattered evenly on the mask's surface. The wearer gains the following abilities:

- +4 profane bonus to Listen, Move Silently, Search, and Spot checks.
- *Cause fear* at will as if cast by a 15th-level sorcerer.
- The wearer gains the ability to make a single bite attack each round. This bite deals 1d8 damage and poison. Fortitude save (DC 18); 3d6 initial and secondary Constitution damage.

Caster Level: 15th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *jump, poison* (brown recluse); Craft Wondrous Item, *ethereal jaunt, poison* (phase spider); Craft Wondrous Item, *cause fear, poison* (black widow); **Market Price:** 37,840 gp (brown recluse), 115,440 gp (phase spider), 56,150 gp (black widow); **Cost to Create:** 18,920 gp + 1,513 XP (brown recluse), 57,720 gp + 6,217 XP (phase spider), 28,075 gp + 2,246 XP (black widow); **Weight:**—.

Desiccator

First created by the drow of House Relyerrin, the *desiccator* has since been duplicated by other drow necromancers. It is an item that mixes torture, necromancy, and alchemy into one terrible whole.

The *desiccator* is a large iron table, and it quite obviously looks like a torture device. There are four solid iron bands where the victim's arms and legs can be restrained (break DC 30, Escape Artist DC 35). The bands are flexible, and the table can hold any creature of size Tiny to size Large. After a creature has been restrained for a full round, the *desiccator* begins emitting hypnotic waves to pacify the victim. Victims must make a Will save (DC 23) each round or be affected by a *dominate monster* effect. Once affected by the *dominate monster* ability, the victim ceases to struggle.

Starting on the second round, the *desiccator* begins to suck out the life force and vital fluids of the victim. Every 10 minutes, the victim must make a Will save (DC 15) or suffer 1 point each of Constitution and Charisma drain. The victim begins to shrivel and dry out during the process, and the bands automatically tighten to prevent him from sliding free from the restraints.

The victim's essence is collected through a series of tubes and vials, which is then used to create a noxious toxin called desiccator poison. This poison is dangerous to most creatures, but it is especially effective against the same race that the essence was derived from. The victim must be drained to death to

Disiccator

Z'henra's Tools

Rod of tentacles

produce enough useful essence. See desiccator poison above.

Creatures that are immune to poison are immune to dessicator poison, but they can still be affected by the *dessicator's* draining effects unless they are somehow immune to Charisma and Constitution damage.

Caster Level: 17th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *dominate monster, horrid wilting;* **Market Price:** 314,000 gp; **Cost to Create:** 153,000 gp + 12,240 XP; **Weight:** 200 lbs.

Z'henra's Tools

Z'henra was a drow torturer whose skill reached legendary proportions. She specialized in the extraction of information from mind flayers, considering them the most challenging of races to break. Over time, she created a series of magical implements of torture to help her crack through the most difficult wills.

The kit contains hooks, scalpels, barbs, razor-sharp tongs, and other sinister looking items, all of which are made of polished silver. The tools have an unusual activation: They must be placed one by one in front of the victim who has to be able to see them. After all of the tools have been placed, the torturer is then free to pick them up and use them on the victim. *Z'henra's tools* grant a +10 profane bonus to Intimidate checks during the course of the torture session. Once per day, the tools can generate a *zone of truth* as if cast by a 12th-level cleric. Curiously, this ability can only be activated after one full hour of torture with the tools has been performed. Sages speculate that Z'henra built in this safeguard in case the subject proved too difficult to break through conventional methods, and they remain convinced that the ability was rarely used.

Caster Level: 12th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *zone of truth;* **Market Price:** 8,640 gp; **Cost to Create:** 4,320 gp + 346 XP; **Market Price:** 8,640 gp.

MAGIC WEAPONS AND ARMOR

The drow are well known for their use of crossbows (especially hand crossbows) as well as light and fast weapons. They also enjoy causing pain, and some drow forgo weapons that kill immediately for ones that draw out the agony of their opponents.

Bolt of Discord

Delighting in sowing chaos among their enemies, the drow have created weapons that disrupt and confuse, thereby prolonging the conflict. A *bolt of discord* is a *+1 crossbow bolt* covered in bizarre sigils that seem to move on their own accord. Upon impact, the bolt releases a *confusion* spell with a 15-foot radius, as if cast by a 13th-level wizard (Will save DC 16 to resist). In addition, if a creature is directly struck by the *bolt of discord*, it is affected by an *insanity* spell as if cast by a 13th-level wizard (Will save DC 20 to resist).

Caster Level: 13th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *confusion, insanity;* **Market Price:** 3250 gp; **Cost to Create:** 1625 gp + 130 XP; **Weight:** —.

Lash of Torment

This whip is embedded with cruel spikes of iron and glass, effectively making it a whip-dagger. (Whip daggers are exotic weapons from *Sword and Fist*. They cost 25 gp, deal 1d6 points of slashing damage, score a critical on a 19-20, and weigh 3 pounds. They are identical to whips in all other respects.) It is usually found in the possession of drow slavers or torturers. In the hands of a non-drow, the *lash of torment* acts merely as a *+1 whip dagger*. In addition, every time that the non-drow wielder misses, the *lash of torment* curls back and strikes the wielder. This curse has been placed on the weapon to prevent slaves from taking it up against their masters. Some drow slavers leave the *lash of torment* in a place where a slave can find it, watching with delight as the slave suffers the consequences of a missed strike.

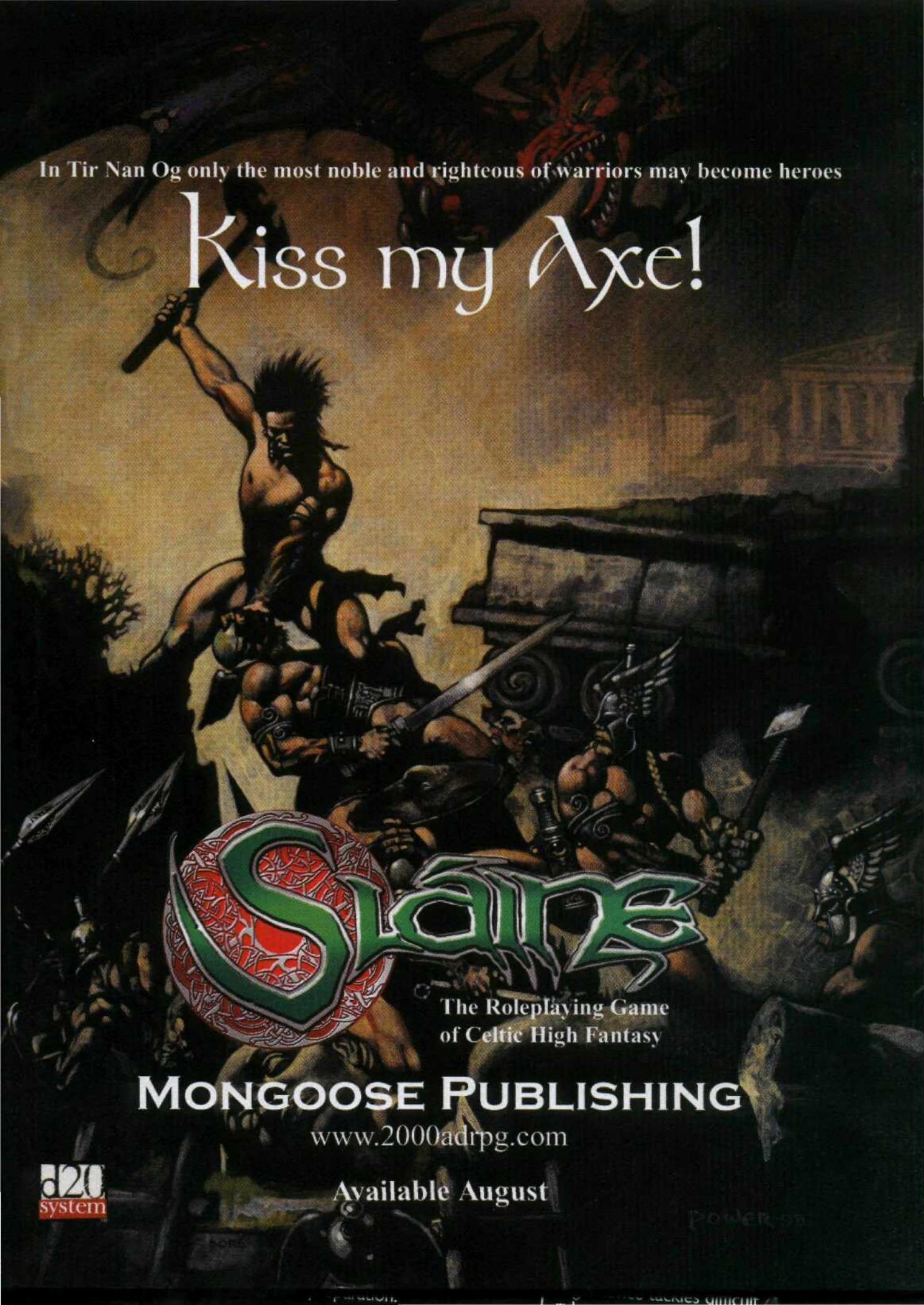
In the hands of a drow, the *lash of torment* functions as a *+3 wounding whip dagger*. On a critical hit, the *lash of torment* also causes tremendous pain. The victim suffers wracking pains, resulting in a -2 penalty to Dexterity and a -4 penalty to all attack rolls, skill checks, and ability checks. A Fortitude save (DC 18) negates this effect. Both effects last 1d10 minutes, and any additional hits from a *lash of torment* during this time have no further effect on the victim beyond the normal damage inflicted.

Caster Level: 15th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *mordenkainen's sword, symbol;* **Market Price:** 98,325; **Cost to Create:** 49,162 + 3,933 XP.

Rod of Tentacles

This disturbing looking rod looks as though it is made out of a coiled mass of tentacles. It is warm and rubbery to the touch and wiggles slightly when held. If used in melee combat, the *rod of tentacles* acts as a *+1 heavy mace.*

The *rod of tentacles* allows the wielder to cast *evard's black tentacles* up to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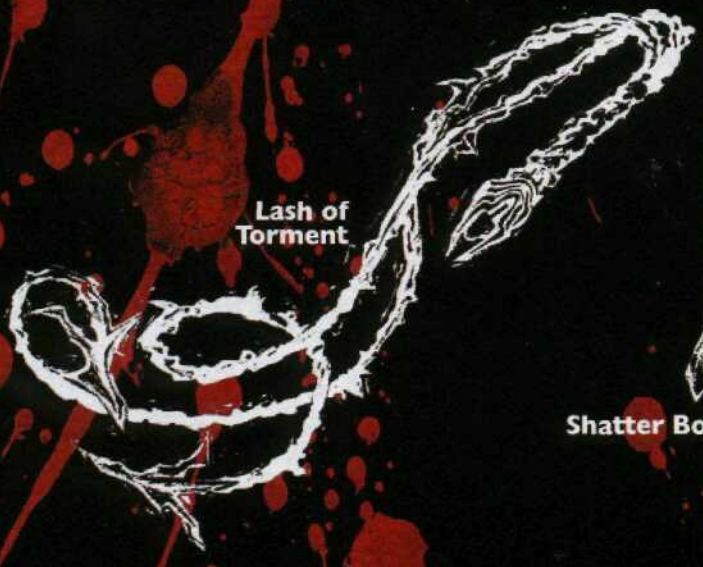

Lash of Torment

Shatter Bolts

Silk Armor

three times a day as if cast by a 15th-level wizard. Once per day, the rod can be turned into a bizarre creature that follows the commands of the wielder. When hurled to the ground and a command word is spoken, the rod turns into a mass of writhing, slimy tentacles. It remains in this form for a number of rounds equal to the wielder's total class level. It has the following statistics and abilities:

Tentacle Beast: CR –; Large construct; HD 8d10; hp 44; Init +2; Spd 20 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 18 (touch 11, flat-footed 16); Atk +10 melee (1d6+5, 8 tentacle rakes); Face/reach 10 ft. by 10 ft./10 ft.; SA Constrict; improved grab; SQ Construct traits, damage reduction 10/+1; AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +3; Str 20, Dex 15, Con–, Int–, Wis 12, Cha 3.

Constrict (Ex): A tentacle beast deals 2d8+5 points of damage with a successful grapple check against Medium-size or smaller creatures.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the tentacle beast must hit a Medium-size or smaller opponent with a tentacle rake attack. If it gets a hold, it can constrict.

Construct Traits: Immune to mind-influencing effects (charms, compulsions, phantasms, patterns, and morale effects), and to poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, necromantic effects, and any effect that requires a Fortitude save unless it also works on objects; cannot heal damage; not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, ability drain, or energy drain; not at risk of death from massive damage, but destroyed when reduced to 0 hit points or less; cannot be raised or resurrected; darkvision 60 ft.

If the tentacle beast is killed, it immediately reverts back into the rod form and cannot be used for a full 24 hours. If the tentacle beast is destroyed through use of a *disintegrate, limited wish, miracle,* or *wish* spell, the rod is completely destroyed.

Caster Level: 15th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Rod, *animate object, evard's black tentacles;* **Market Price:** 86,000 gp; **Cost to Create:** 43,000 gp + 3440 XP; **Weight:** 12 lbs.

NON-MAGIC WEAPONS AND ARMOR

Drow rely on slaves to produce most of their weapons and armor, but a few inventive drow perfect weapons too valuable to leave in the hands of slaves or simple laborers. These weapons and armor, like all secrets of the drow, rarely make their way into the hands of other races, but some have seen enough regular use to be recognizable by most experienced adventurers.

Shatter Bolt

This beautiful crossbow bolt is crafted entirely from a specialized form of glass. It has a long tip that is more slender than the rest of the shaft. Upon striking a target, it shatters into razor sharp slivers that cause tremendous amounts of pain, increasing the critical increment to 18-20/x3. Shatter bolts are available for both normal sized (light and heavy) crossbows and hand crossbows.

Shatter bolts are extremely delicate, however, and they are easily destroyed by intense jostling, such as what occurs in melee combat. Any time that a person holding shatter bolts (held, in a crossbow or in a quiver) is grappled, tripped, or takes 10 or more points of damage from a single strike, there is a 50% chance that all the shatter bolts will break and be destroyed. A *shatter* spell automatically destroys any shatter bolts that are caught in its area of effect. Unlike normal bolts, shatter bolts are always destroyed if they miss their target. Because of this, most wielders of shatter bolts try to stay out of melee.

Because of their extremely fragile structure, shatter bolts cannot be the target of the following spells: *magic weapon, keen edge,* and *greater magic weapon.*

Market Price: 75 gp each; **Weight:** 1 lb. (10 bolts).

Silk Armor

Crafted by highly trained artisans who weave this armor from the silk of monstrous spiders, silk armor is a highly prized form of protection favored by drow who want to look good without weighing themselves down. Silk armor looks more like a medium-weight jerkin than regular armor, but is incredibly tough and resilient.

Silk armor is light armor. This armor provides a +3 armor bonus and has a +8 maximum Dexterity bonus. The armor has an arcane spell failure chance of 5% and a -1 armor check penalty. Silk armor is naturally accepting of enhancements. Although the enhancement's cost is unaffected, the time it takes to add the enhancement to the armor is reduced by half. In addition, non-masterwork silk armor can be enhanced with magic.

Market Price: 5,000 gp; **Weight:** 15 lbs. D

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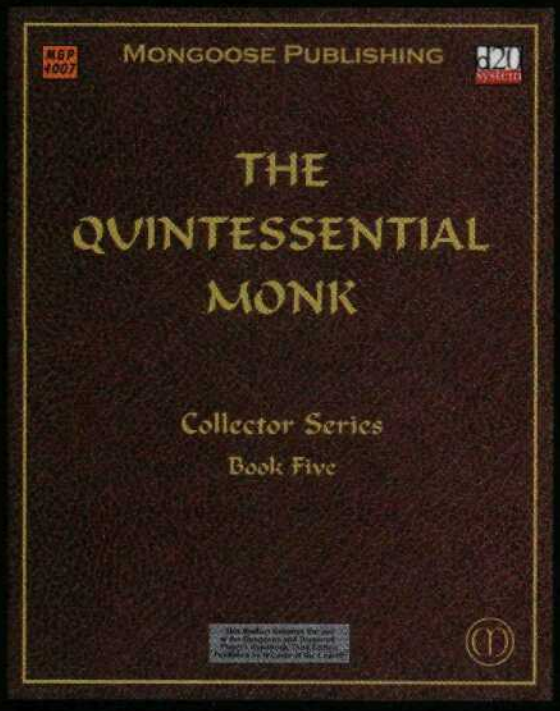

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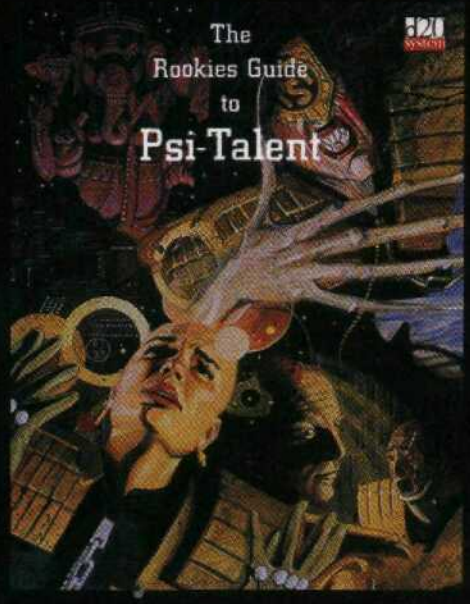

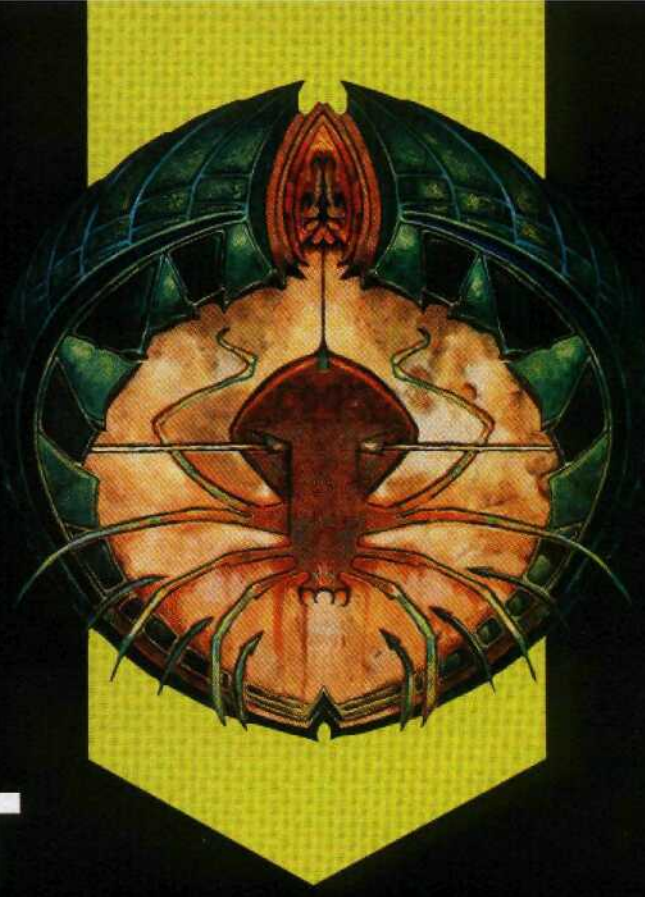

CRUSADES OF THE ASHEN COMPACT VS. DROW

by Jim Bishop · illustrated by Jonathan Wayshak

The Ashen Compact is a secret cabal of subterranean races that recruit and train surface adventurers to make war against the drow. They call their training grounds "academies," and they advertise themselves in the surface world as agents of a great crusade against evil, but their motives are far from pure.

The Compact was formed years ago, when the drow noble house of Ildorno took power in its native city and began a campaign of systematic conquest of the surrounding races. Creatures who had been at each other's throats for eons suddenly found themselves shoulder to shoulder as they fled to safety. As the survivors of the mind flayer, duergar, derro, and aboleth nations came together in the ash and ruins of their former cities, they met for the first time in peaceful negotiations.

No single nation was strong enough to face the drow alone. Any two nations could join forces to crush the drow, but that would mean leaving themselves undefended and open to attacks from the others. They could not agree on how to divide forces, and so could not agree to a four-way alliance. The beaten races realized that they needed to go outside their borders for help—to the great heroes of the surface world. As they finalized their plans, they made an oath of loyalty to each other. Thus the Ashen Compact was born.

Within days, the first agents of the Ashen Compact stole to the surface. A dozen mind flayers, derro, and duergar warriors traveled at night under magical protections and began their reconnaissance of local settlements. With the duergar and derro supplying muscle, and the mind flayers able to create loyal subjects, they quickly formed a base of power in the catacombs under an abandoned temple, while establishing a front of brainwashed followers in the ruins above. The team's puppets insinuated themselves into the local community, spreading word that they required heroes for a crusade against the hated dark elves.

THE FIRST STUDENTS

The news spread quickly, and before long the usual crowd of malcontents, riffraff, and adventurers gathered in the moss-covered churchyard to take the first solemn oath against their new foe. Many races answered the call, including a large number of elves, all of them raised on tales of dark elf treachery and villainy.

The group was split into three different divisions according to the students' skills, and training began in earnest. Those skilled in the art of fighting began their schooling with ancient treatises on drow tactics, anatomy, and psychology. Once these subjects were mastered, their duergar instructors—disguised as deep dwarves—put them through months of grueling drills in the total darkness of the catacombs.

FOR YOUR CAMPAIGN

Even if drow don't exist in your campaign, you can still use many elements of this article. Here are some suggestions to get you started.

- You can use the background story of the Ashen Compact's creation as an interesting plot hook. In this case, the agents might be fighting another evil race that is prevalent in your campaign, or perhaps their crusade is against a tribe of good dwarves. Your PCs might be recruited into a Compact academy, or some concerned parents might ask the PCs for help in learning what happened to their children after they joined the local academy.
- The NPC agents presented in this article don't have to be connected in any way. You can simply use the monsters as interesting NPCs or enemies that the player characters encounter.
- Use the prestige classes presented in this article to make other interesting NPCs. If drow don't play a significant role in your campaign, simply tweak the classes to better fit your world. For example, you can swap the drow sign language ability of the deep avenger and gloomblade prestige classes with some other language.

Members with a more larcenous bent were taken to the ruined bell tower, where the maze of shattered beams and masonry accustomed them to the conditions of deep caverns. These students studied under a trio of derro, whose rasping voices came from behind a screen, teaching how to listen to the earth and strike from ambush.

Meanwhile, a solitary aboleth had been ferried up through the dark tunnels and secreted in the old temple's cistern. Here the spellcasters of the group were secretly subjected to hypnotic suggestion, sensory deprivation, and psychic surgery to strengthen their minds. Eventually, the more exceptional spellcasters were fused with the ancient creature's alien consciousness, gaining supernatural perception at the expense of their normal eyesight.

The First Crusade

Within a year, the ragged volunteers were forged into an expert fighting force. Their old skills and ways of life were forgotten, replaced with a deadly focus on fighting dark elves in their pitch-black homes.

The Ashen Compact agents equipped their forces, took them deep into the earth, and set them loose on the guard towers and keeps of the house Ildorno drow. Within hours the drow defenses were shattered, and they retreated to deeper tunnels. Over the following weeks, the dark elves sent waves of elite troops at the invaders, but to no avail. Before a month passed, house Ildorno was nothing but a memory, and with it went all hopes of drow conquest in the region.

The creators of the Ashen Compact met just once more, in the weeks following this decisive victory. The representatives met in comfort this time, but the mood was no lighter. Each envoy committed his nation's people and resources to more academies and fixed their targets for the next assaults. Finally, they agreed that the Compact would never meet again; the risk of discovery by drow forces was too great. Every academy would operate as an independent cell on the surface world and seek the destruction of the dark elf nation.

THE ASHEN COMPACT IN A D&D GAME

The Academies: Founding and Operations

Academies are completely independent from any central body, thus the DM may place an academy almost anywhere in his campaign world. A typical academy is located no more than 30 miles from the nearest major cave entrance. The agents' pattern is to occupy an existing structure, usually an abandoned one that has been ravaged by time.

Most often, Compact operations are set up in the ruins of temples and monasteries. These buildings are usually designed to accommodate large groups, and they have the additional advantage of having been built to foster privacy for those within their walls. Best of all, these buildings carry the seal of faith and help to sell the surrounding communities on the academy's values and sincerity.

Fortresses are abandoned far less frequently than religious buildings, but their strong construction and strategic placement make them almost as desirable. In the absence of a fortified structure, Compact agents work with whatever is at hand and are not above setting up their academies in a farmhouse, winery, river barge, and even—if the reports are true—in the walls of a ruined dam.

Academies are founded with no warning, springing up in a few days before local authorities can ask too many questions. Major repairs and new construction wait for the first crop of students, and these sites often change dramatically over the course of a few years.

When a suitable site is located, slaves and duergar work to clean it out, while mind flayer "missionaries" move through the landscape spreading word among the locals. Mind flayers are nothing if not cunning, and they use their guile to every advantage as they seed the locals with rumors, omens, and portentous "dreams" to support their crusade.

Once the space is ready, the local authorities are summoned to the academy for its opening. Here the Compact agents exert all their influence, including psionic and magic domination, to get community leaders on their side. If they are even moderately successful, word spreads quickly, and soon the academy is deluged with applicants. All are accepted, but only a select few are trained for combat. Most serve the crusade as menial laborers and craftsmen, or as food for the ravenous "instructors."

Training

Instruction has changed little since the days of the first academy. Duergar still instruct the warriors in blind fighting and the ways of dark elves; derro savants pass on secrets of ambush to their thralls and teach them how to read the stone and walk among spiders with no danger; and the aboleth and mind flayers perform their blasphemous surgery on spellcaster applicants.

Several advancements in spell research and alchemy have been made since the first crusade, and these new alchemical items, spells, and magic weapons are now a part of the curriculum in every academy.

The Crusade

The credo and purpose of these academies is

"holy war." Toward this end, each academy has a drow city or outpost as its target and a quota of soldiers to fill if they hope to succeed in their goal. The entire process, from founding an academy to embarking on a crusade, takes at least one year, sometimes two.

When the time is right, the crusaders are gathered and armed with magic and alchemical items. They are treated to a stirring send-off and led into the nearest dark cavern toward their enemy. Only a few Compact agents accompany these forces; usually a few duergar scouts and an invisible mind flayer lead the crusaders to ensure they remain true to their cause.

When the crusaders reach their target, the Compact agents hang back and observe the battle, eventually falling back to report to the academy. If the academy students are victorious, they return as heroes and begin training for their next mission. If they break and flee, they are taken captive at the surface and eaten during the long months while new students are recruited.

Caravans

Ashen Compact agents travel across country for only two reasons: They have been sent out to found a new academy or they have been uncovered by local authorities and are fleeing to a new safe haven. In either case, their disguise is paramount.

On casual inspection, a Compact caravan appears to be a traveling crew of deep dwarf smiths. The duergar fighters who drive the teams are magically disguised and often carry dwarf-crafted items as cover. Lurking inside the canvas-shielded wagons is a single derro savant with crossbow at the ready, a pair of mind flayer missionaries who telepathically scan all visitors as a matter of course, and a single aboleth hierophant floating in its hidden tank, generating illusions as the situation demands.

Caravan Encounters: If encountered on the road, the duergar do their best to come across as gruff and ordinary deep dwarves traveling from their home to sell wares. They have dwarven goods to sell, but these are just spoils of ancient war, and they can be identified as such by bardic lore and the *legend lore* spell. Even if provoked, the caravan takes pains to avoid revealing its true nature. Only when attacked does the full capacity of a Compact caravan become known. Typically, the aboleth hierophant creates scores of illusionary attackers, while the mind flayers emerge from hiding and mind blast their attackers. Any who are stunned by the mind flayers' opening attack are then subjected to their horrific extract ability. The caravan's derro savant attempts to skulk around the rear, casting spells and making sneak attacks when possible.

Ashen Compact NPCs

Listed below are the complete statistics for a typical group of Compact agents sent out to found a new academy. Each group usually includes two duergar toughs, two derro savants, one mind flayer, and one aboleth, although additional agents might be added to the group if the area of a new potential academy is densely populated.

Duergar Tough, Male Duergar Ftr3: CR 3; Medium-size humanoid; HD 3d10+6; hp 21; Init +2; Spd 20 ft.; AC 18 (touch 14, flat-footed 16); Atk +7 melee (1d8/1d6, masterwork dwarven urgrosh); SA Spell-like abilities; SQ Duergar traits; AL LE; SV Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +3; Str 16, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 4.

Skills: Climb +9, Jump +9, Listen +5, Move Silently +6, Spot +5; *Feats:* Alertness, Blind-Fight, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (dwarven urgrosh), Power Attack.

Possessions: Masterwork dwarven urgrosh, *+1 masterwork breastplate, 2 potions of alter self.*

Derro Savant, Rog2/Sor5: CR 7; Medium-size humanoid; HD 2d6+5d4; hp 22; Init +1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 11; Atk +2 melee (1d6-1, short sword), +6 ranged (1d8+1, *+1 repeating crossbow*); SQ Derro traits; AL CE; SV Fort +1, Ref +5, Will +3; Str 8, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 16, Wis 8, Cha 14.

Skills: Appraise +8, Balance +6, Bluff +7, Climb +4, Concentration +8, Diplomacy +7, Disable Device +8, Escape Artist +6, Hide +6, Intuit Direction +4, Knowledge (arcana) +11, Listen +4, Spellcraft +11, Use Rope +6; *Feats:* Blind-Fight, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (repeating crossbow), Point Blank Shot, Silent Spell.

Spells Known (Sor 6/7/5; base DC = 12 + spell level): 0—*dancing lights, detect magic, detect poison, flare, prestidigitation, read magic;* 1st—*mage armor, magic missile, spider climb, ventriloquism;* 2nd—*cat's grace, whispering wind.*

Possessions: +1 repeating crossbow, short sword, 2 flasks each of acid and alchemist's fire, *2 potions of cure serious wounds, 2 potions of misdirection, 2 potions of detect thoughts, wand of charm person* (35 charges).

Mind Flayer Missionary, Clr1: CR 9; Medium-size aberration; HD 8d8+8; 1d8+1; hp 48; Init +6; Spd 30 ft.; AC 19 (touch 14, flat-footed 17); Atk +8 melee (1d4+1, 4 tentacles); SA Mind blast, improved grab, extract, psionics; SQ SR 25, telepathy; AL LE; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +11; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 19, Wis 17, Cha 17.

Skills: Bluff +8, Concentration +12, Hide +8, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (arcana) +9, Knowledge (religion) +9, Listen +8, Move Silently +7, Spellcraft +8, Spot +10; *Feats:* Alertness, Combat Casting, Dodge, Expertise,

FOR YOUR CHARACTER

There are many elements of this article that can be useful to player characters.

- Consider using this article to provide a background for your character. Perhaps she was recruited into a Compact academy and escaped within an inch of her life when she realized she was a pawn for other evil creatures. Maybe a family member, such as a brother, was recruited into the academy and never heard from again. Now she's determined to learn what happened to her sibling.
- Ask your DM if you can use one of the prestige classes presented in this article. If drow aren't prevalent in her campaign, she might consider changing the drow-specific abilities to something more useful. For instance, your dwarf PC might be a gloomblade—a soldier trained to fight his clans hated enemy, the duergar.
- This article presents a number of new game elements. If you are interested in the magical or alchemical items presented here, ask your DM if she'll allow them in her campaign. Perhaps you and your fellow adventurers will stumble across some of these treasures after exploring the ruins of what seems to have been an old academy of some sort . . .

Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse (tentacle).

Spells Prepared (3/3, base DC = 13 + spell level) 0—*detect magic, purify food and water, read magic;* 1st—*cause fear*, deathwatch, doom.*

*Domain Spell. *Domains:* Death (death touch 1/day), Destruction (smite 1/day).

Possessions: Ring of protection +2, bracers of armor +2.

Aboleth Hierophant, Ill2: CR 10; Huge aberration (aquatic); HD 8d8+40; 2d4+10; hp 91; Init +1; Spd 10 ft., swim 60 ft.; AC 16 (touch 9, flat-footed 15); Atk +13 melee (1d6+9 and transformation, 4 tentacles); SA Transformation, psionics, enslave; SQ Mucus cloud; AL LE; SV Fort +7, Ref +3, Will +14; Str 26, Dex 12, Con 20, Int 15, Wis 17, Cha 17.

Skills: Alchemy +6, Concentration +19, Knowledge (arcana) +9, Listen +12, Spellcraft +8, Spot +12; *Feats:* Alertness, Combat Casting, Iron Will, Scribe Scroll.

Spells Prepared (4/3; base DC = 12 + spell level): 0—*detect magic* (x2), *prestidigitation* (x2); 1st—*mage armor, obscuring mist, Nystul's undetectable aura.*

Spellbook: 0—all; 1st—*change self, mage armor, magic missile, Nystul's undetectable aura*, obscuring mist, true strike.*

*Specialization spell. *School:* Illusion.

Possessions: Crystal ball.

NEW PRESTIGE CLASSES

The deep avenger, gloomblade, and gray sage are new prestige classes available to characters who train in an Ashen Compact academy.

Deep Avenger

The deep avenger is a ruthless hunter in the subterranean world, an agent of vengeance from the dawn of elven history. Deep avengers form the body of a Compact crusade and are versatile enough to occupy almost any battlefield niche.

The Compact usually reserves this martial training for elves, harnessing the ancient hatred they hold for their dark kin, however, members of other races may be allowed to train as martial soldiers if they've recently lost a loved one to the drow. A deep avenger is a terrible opponent, able to find and destroy his chosen enemy with fierce precision.

Barbarians, fighters, paladins, and rangers make strong deep avengers who are eager to fight on the front lines. Clerics and druids add a potent mix of divine magic to the class, and they often fight in the crusades as battlefield healers and diviners. Wizards and sorcerers do not usually have the martial training to meet the class requirements, but multiclass fighters/wizards are far from rare and often serve as officers in the crusades.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the deep avenger prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Deep avengers are proficient with all simple and martial weapons, all armor, and shields.

Brutal Strike (Ex): Deep avengers receive instruction on drow physiology, learning the race's vital points, major arteries, and pain centers, thus allowing them to fight the drow with ruthless efficiency. On his turn, a deep avenger may add +1 to either one attack roll or one damage roll, but not both. He must declare where the bonus applies at the start of his action. For every three levels gained, this bonus increases by +1.

Drow Sign Language (Ex): Before they go on crusade, deep avengers learn the silent language of their prey. Using these hand signals, a team of Compact crusaders can communicate silently at distances of up to 120 feet as long as they can see each other. Note that a deep avenger learns this language without spending skill points.

Darkvision (Ex): After long months of training in total darkness, the eyes of deep avengers are subjected to arcane alchemical treatments that grant them darkvision to a range of 60 feet. At 7th level, a deep avenger's darkvision improves to 120 feet.

See the Light (Sp): At 3rd level, the deep avenger gains the ability to cast either *daylight* or *sunbeam* once per day as a spell-like ability, chosen at the time of casting. These abilities are as the spells cast by a 10th-level sorcerer (save DC 10 + Charisma modifier + spell level). At 6th and 9th level, the deep avenger gains one additional use of this ability per day.

Rage (Ex): At 5th level, a deep avenger can fly into a rage, gaining phenomenal strength and durability but becoming reckless and less able to defend himself. He temporarily gains a +4 bonus to Strength and Constitution, and a +2 morale bonus on Will saves, but suffers a -2 penalty to AC. The rage lasts for a number of rounds equal to 3 + the character's (newly improved) Constitution modifier.

The deep avenger can enter a rage once per day at 5th level and twice per

DEEP AVENGER Requirements

To qualify to become a deep avenger, a character must fulfill all of the following criteria.

Base Attack Bonus: +7.

Feats: Blind-Fight, Power Attack.

Special: Must speak Undercommon.

Special: A deep avenger must have lost a loved one to drow in the last 5 years.

DEEP AVENGER Class Skills

The deep avenger's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are:

Str: Climb, Jump, Swim.

Dex: –

Con: –

Int: Craft (any).

Wis: Intuit Direction.

Cha: Handle Animal, Ride.

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

DEEP AVENGER ADVANCEMENT

HIT DIE D8

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+1	+2	+0	+2	Brutal strike +1, drow sign language
2nd	+2	+3	+0	+3	Darkvision 60 ft.
3rd	+3	+3	+1	+3	*See the light* 1/day
4th	+4	+4	+1	+4	Brutal strike +2
5th	+5	+4	+1	+4	Rage 1/day
6th	+6	+5	+2	+5	*See the light* 2/day
7th	+7	+5	+2	+5	Brutal strike +3, darkvision 120 ft.
8th	+8	+6	+2	+6	Resist poison
9th	+9	+6	+3	+6	*See the light* 3/day
10th	+10	+7	+3	+7	Rage 2/day, brutal strike +4

GLOOMBLADE Requirements

To qualify to become a gloomblade, a character must fulfill all of the following criteria.

Move Silently: 10 ranks.

Hide: 10 ranks.

Feats: Alertness, Blind-Fight.

Special: Must speak Undercommon.

GLOOMBLADE Class Skills

The gloomblade's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are:

Str: Climb, Jump, Swim.

Dex: Balance, Escape Artist, Hide, Move Silently, Open Lock, Pick Pocket, Tumble, Use Rope.

Con: –

Int: Appraise, Craft (any), Disable Device, Forgery, Search.

Wis: Innuendo, Intuit Direction, Listen, Sense Motive, Spot.

Cha: Bluff, Diplomacy, Disguise, Gather Information, Intimidate, Use Magic Device.

Skill Points at Each Level: 8 + Int modifier.

GLOOMBLADE ADVANCEMENT

HIT DIE D6

Class Level	Base Attack	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+0	+0	+2	+0	Sneak attack +1d6, drow sign language
2nd	+1	+0	+3	+0	Tremorsense 30 feet
3rd	+2	+1	+3	+1	*Stonescreen* 2/day
4th	+3	+1	+4	+1	Sneak attack +2d6
5th	+3	+1	+4	+1	Immunities
6th	+4	+2	+5	+2	*Stonescreen* 3/day
7th	+5	+2	+5	+2	Sneak attack +3d6
8th	+6	+2	+6	+2	Tremorsense 60 feet
9th	+6	+3	+6	+3	Ranged disarm, *stonescreen* 4/day
10th	+7	+3	+7	+3	Sneak attack +4d6

day at 10th level. If he already has the rage ability from another class, the bonuses do not stack, but he gains additional uses of this ability at 5th and 10th level.

Resist Poison (Ex): Deep avengers are exposed to poisons in controlled doses, thereby building up a stronger resistance to them. At 8th level, a deep avenger gain a +4 bonus on Fortitude saving throws against poison.

GLOOMBLADE

Gloomblades serve in the Compact crusades as scouts and infiltrators. Elite gloomblades range far ahead of the main force, eliminating drow guard posts, trapping the dark elves' tunnels and caverns, and creating as much confusion as possible. Junior members form the ranged combat contingent of the main crusading force.

Gloomblades come from every race and background, but most are elves, dwarves, and halflings, and all have received some sort of training in reconnaissance. They share an overriding passion for the destruction of dark elves, and in the Ashen Compact's academies, they are trained to defeat the drow on their own terms.

Rogues make the best gloomblades, but rangers, monks, and bards can certainly become successful gloomblades as well. The martial classes stand to gain more from the deep avenger prestige class and rarely possess the skills or patience required to become gloomblades. Spellcasters have little to gain from this class.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the gloomblade prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Gloomblades are proficient with all simple and martial weapons, and light armor.

Sneak Attack: A 1st-level gloomblade gains the sneak attack ability (see the Rogue section in Chapter 3 of the *Player's Handbook*) if she does not already have it. She gains +1d6 damage at 1st level, and an additional 1d6 every three levels thereafter. If she already has the sneak attack ability from a previous class, the damage bonuses stack.

Drow Sign Language (Ex): Before they go on crusade, gloomblades learn the silent language of their prey. Using these hand signals, a team of Compact crusaders can communicate silently at distances of up to 120 feet as long as they can see each other. Note that a gloomblade learns this language without spending skill points.

Tremorsense (Ex): During their training, gloomblades learn to pay attention to subtle vibrations and changes in air temperature. As a result, they are as aware of their immediate environment as a spider in its web. Three times per day, the gloomblade may take a full-round action to detect these tiny clues, gaining the benefits of the tremorsense special quality for 1 round. She automatically senses the location of any creature within 30 feet that is in contact with the ground. This distance increases to 60 feet at 8th level.

***Stonescreen* (Sp):** At 3rd level, the gloomblade gains the ability to take the form of a large rock formation, such as a boulder or a stalagmite, as per the *stonescreen* spell (see the Stonescreen Spell Description sidebar in this article), except that the duration is one hour per gloomblade level. The gloomblade may use this ability twice per day at 3rd level and gains one additional use of this ability per day at 6th and 9th level.

Immunities (Ex): Gloomblades undergo even more rigorous and painful exposure to poisons than deep avengers. As a result, gloomblades gain immunity to all poisons.

Ranged Disarm: Gloomblades are trained to disarm their opponents as quickly as possible. At 9th level, a gloomblade can use ranged attacks to disarm opponents within 30 feet. Doing so doesn't provoke an attack of opportunity from the defender unless a normal ranged attack would (if the gloomblade and the target are adjacent, for instance). Regardless of the ranged weapon the gloomblade is using, it counts as a one-handed, Medium-size

IMPROVED COUNTERSPELL [General]

You understand the nuances of magic to such an extent that you can counter your opponents' spells with great efficiency.

Benefit: When counterspelling, instead of using the exact spell you are trying to counter, you may use a spell of the same school that is one or more levels higher than the target spell.

GRAY SAGE ADVANCEMENT

HIT DIE D4

Class Level	Base Attack	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special	Spells/Day
1st	+0	+0	+0	+2	Improved Counterspell, handreading	+1 level of existing class
2nd	+1	+0	+0	+3	Blindsight 30 feet	+1 level of existing class
3rd	+1	+1	+1	+3	Improved silent spell 2/day	+1 level of existing class
4th	+2	+1	+1	+4	Improved spell penetration +4	+1 level of existing class
5th	+2	+1	+1	+4	Greater Counterspell	+1 level of existing class
6th	+3	+2	+2	+5	Improved silent spell 4/day	+1 level of existing class
7th	+3	+2	+2	+5	Blindsight 60 feet	+1 level of existing class
8th	+4	+2	+2	+6	Increased spell penetration +6	+1 level of existing class
9th	+4	+3	+3	+6	Improved silent spell 6/day	+1 level of existing class
10th	+5	+3	+3	+7	*Mordenkainen's disjunction*	+1 level of existing class

GRAY SAGE Requirements

To qualify to become a gray sage, a character must fulfill all of the following criteria.

Feats: Blind-Fight, Silent Spell, Spell Penetration.

Spells: Able to cast any 4th-level Conjuration spell.

Special: Must speak Undercommon.

GRAY SAGE Class Skills

The gray sage's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are:

Str: –

Dex: –

Con: Concentration.

Int: Alchemy, Craft (any), Knowledge (all skills, taken individually), Scry (exclusive skill), Spellcraft.

Wis: Intuit Direction, Profession.

Cha: –

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

weapon for the opposed disarm check. The gloomblade cannot lose her own weapon during such an attempt.

GRAY SAGE

A gray sage is a silent, watchful figure of terrible devotion. These spellcasters give up their lives in the sunlit world and eventually sacrifice their sight to the cause of war against the dark elves.

Gray sages are trained in total darkness and drilled night and day in the tactics and methods of their enemy. On a crusade, every gray sage is assigned to a squad of troopers as magical support. Their role is to protect their squad against summoned demons and vermin, keep them free of the normal spells cast by the drow, and to maintain a cloak of illusion or invisibility around them. In more dire situations, gray sages unleash powerful offensive magic on the front lines.

Gray sages are usually humans or elves, and the majority begin their careers as wizards and sorcerers. Clerics and druids also make good gray sages. A small number of bards are allowed to train as gray sages, but these jacks-of-all-trades typically fare better as gloomblades.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the gray sage prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Gray sages gain no new proficiency in any weapon or armor.

Spells Per Day: When a new gray sage level is gained, the character gains new spells per day as if he had also gained a level in a spellcasting class he belonged to before adding the prestige class. He does not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained (improved chance of controlling or rebuking undead, metamagic or item creation feats, and so on), except for an increased effective level of spellcasting. If a character had more than one spellcasting class before becoming a gray sage, he must decide to which class he adds the new level for purposes of determining spells per day.

Improved Counterspell: Gray sages spend much of their first year training to counter spells commonly cast by the dark elves. They gain the Improved Counterspell feat (*Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting*) as a bonus feat. In addition, if the target spell is *dancing lights, darkness,* or *faerie fire,* the gray sage gains a +2 bonus to his Spellcraft check.

Handreading (Ex): As part of their immersion training, gray sages spend months in total darkness while they hone their craft. One side effect of this is the preternatural ability to read script with the tips of their fingers. This allows wizards to study their spellbooks without a light source, and allows all casters to use scrolls in the darkness of the drow kingdoms. This does not impart any ability to read additional languages or to decipher previously unreadable script. *Glyphs of warding* and other similar spells activate normally when read "by hand."

Blindsight (Ex): When a gray sage is judged worthy, he is brought before the high council of aboleths and mind flayers who dwell in the depths of the academy. These creatures are well disguised as humanoid magicians, and thus, the gray sage has no reason to suspect that anything is amiss. The gray sage is placed into a trance, and then the mind flayers excise and cauterize portions of his brain. This horrific procedure leaves the character completely blind, but with a new ability to sense the world through magic vibrations. He suffers the effects of blindness, but gains blindsight with a range of 30 feet. This increases to 60 feet at 7th level. The surgery has no other effects, and the character's memories of the event are mercifully wiped clean before he wakes.

The gray sage can be cured of his blindness with *cure blindness, heal,* or other powerful curative magic. However, such healing causes the gray sage to lose any blindsight granted by this class and prevents further advancement as a gray sage.

Greater Counterspell (Ex): At 5th level, a gray sage's counterspell ability improves so that when counterspelling, he may use any spell of the same school that is of equal level to the target spell. In addition, if the target spell is *dancing lights, darkness,* or *faerie fire,* the gray sage gains an additional +4 bonus to his Spellcraft check. If the target spell is a Conjuration (Summoning) spell, the gray sage gains a +2 bonus to his Spellcraft check.

Improved Spell Penetration (Ex): Gray sages receive intense training on how to overcome the dark elves' potent spell

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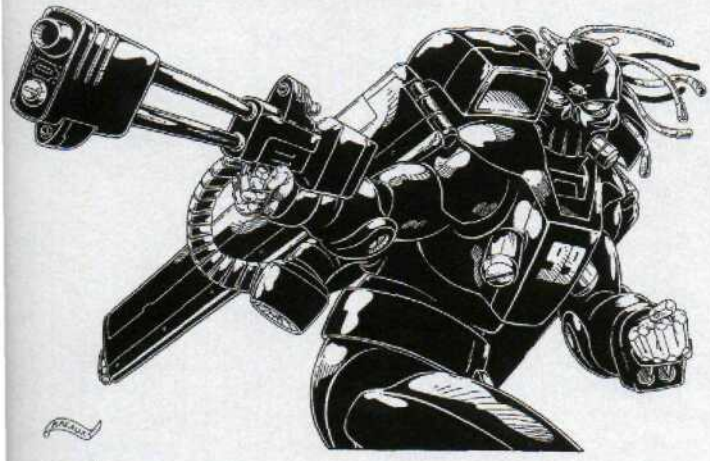

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resistance. As a result, they gain a +4 bonus on caster level checks (1d20 + caster level) to beat a creature's spell resistance. This bonus does not stack with the bonus from the Spell Penetration or Greater Spell Penetration (*Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting*) feats. At 8th level, this bonus increases to +6.

Improved Silent Spell (Su): Beginning at 3rd level, the gray sage can cast a spell silently with no verbal components. This ability is similar to the Silent Spell feat, except that it does not use a spell slot one level higher than the spell's actual level. For example, the gray sage could cast a silent *fireball* as a 3rd-level spell instead of a 4th-level spell. He can use this ability twice per day at 3rd level, 4 times per day at 6th level, and 6 times per day at 9th level.

Mordenkainen's Disjunction (Sp): Highly skilled and successful gray sages catch the attention of their aboleth and mind flayer instructors. These few students are taken aside for special training, where they learn to harness the power of their minds to disjoin magical effects and magic items. Once per day, a 10th-level gray sage can cast *mordenkainen's disjunction* as a 20th-level wizard.

Equipping the Troops

Those dedicated to the Compact crusades have developed a number of useful spells and alchemical and magic items to assist them in their quest to rid the world of drow. Most are given to the troops as standard equipment, but they are closely guarded, and it is rare for the items to be seen on the open market.

Alchemical Items

Deepsmoke Stick: This alchemically treated wooden stick is similar to a smokestick, except that it has also been soaked in a foul-smelling resin that produces an oily smoke in a 10-foot cube when ignited. The smoke is made up of tarry flecks and reflective crystals, and the resulting miasma is so thick that it blocks scent and even blindsight. The cloud has no effect on creatures with tremorsense. The stick is consumed after 1 round, and the smoke dissipates naturally.

Flashball: You can throw this fist-sized sphere as a grenadelike weapon (see page 138 in the *Player's Handbook*). When a flashball strikes a hard surface, it explodes in a flash of brilliant white light. Creatures within a 15-foot radius who suffer penalties in bright light suffer them for 1 round after being exposed to the burst of light. In an area affected by the *darkness* spell, a flashball does not work.

Alchemical Item	Cost	Craft DC
Deepsmoke Stick	40 gp	20
Flashball	40 gp	25
Rockburn Oil	50 gp	30

Rockburn Oil: This viscid green oil is derived from the corrosive slime secreted by delvers. Rockburn oil can be used as a grenadelike weapon (see page 138 in the *Player's Handbook*), dealing 1d4 points of damage to organic creatures or objects. Against metallic creatures or objects, rockburn oil deals 2d4 points of damage, and against stony creatures (including earth elementals) or objects it deals 4d4 points of damage.

Magic Weapon Special Abilities

Subterranean: Subterranean weapons give their bearers an edge in underground combat, granting them a +2 enhancement bonus to attack and damage rolls when at least 30 feet below the surface. In addition, the wielder gains darkvision with a range of 60 feet as long as the weapon is in hand. When held, the wielder of a subterranean weapon suffers from light blindness (blinded for 1 round by bright light, -1 to attacks, saves, and checks when in direct sunlight or the radius of a *daylight* spell) for 1 round. When a subterranean weapon is used aboveground or up to 29 feet below the surface, it acts as a normal weapon, and its magical properties have no affect. Subterranean weapons never shed light; casting a *light* spell on a subterranean weapon has no effect.

Caster Level: 5th; Prerequisites: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *darkvision;* Market Price: +2 bonus.

Sunlight: Sunlight weapons are forged to combat creatures of the deep dark. Upon command, these weapons shed light as a *daylight* spell within a 60 foot radius for up to one hour per day. Creatures who suffer penalties in bright light suffer them while exposed to the light shed by a sunlight weapon. In addition, these creatures suffer an additional 1d6 points of damage when struck by an activated sunlight weapon.

Caster Level: 9th; Prerequisites: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *daylight, sunburst;* Market Price: +1 bonus. D

STONESCREEN

Transmutation
Level: Drd 2, Rgr 3
Components: V, S, DF
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: 1 hour/level (D)

By means of this spell, you are able to assume the form of a tall stalactite, stony crag, or large boulder. The closest inspection cannot reveal that the stone formation in question is actually a magically concealed creature. To all normal tests you are, in fact, a stone formation, although a *detect magic* spell reveals a faint transmutation on the stone. While in stone form, you can observe all that transpires around you just as if you were in your normal form, and your hit points, saves, and class abilities remain unaffected. You gain a +10 natural armor bonus to AC but have an effective Dexterity score of 1. You are immune to critical hits while inside the *stonescreen*. All clothing and gear carried or worn changes with you.

You can dismiss *stonescreen* as a free action (instead of as a standard action).

FEATS FOR DROW-FIGHTERS

Drow Slayer [General]
Your enmity for the drow has led you to learn their tactics and fighting styles, giving you an advantage when fighting them.

Prerequisites: Damage bonus against drow.

Benefit: You gain a +2 insight bonus on all saves against spells and spell-like abilities cast by drow.

Spelunker [General]
You spend long amounts of time exploring and studying caves.

Prerequisites: Alertness, Wis 13+.

Benefit: You gain a +2 bonus on all Search, Spot, and Climb checks made in natural caverns and tunnels. Note that these bonuses do not apply in worked stone or masonry structures. The bonuses from this feat stack with those from the Alertness feat.

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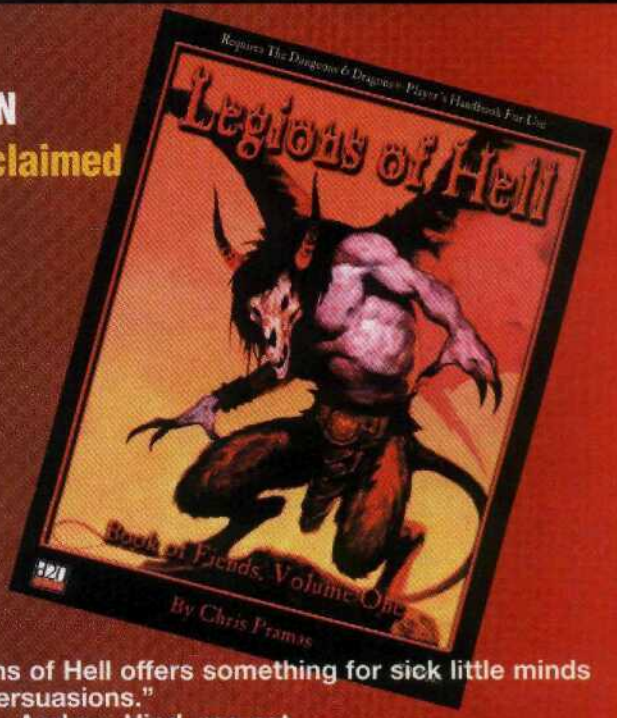

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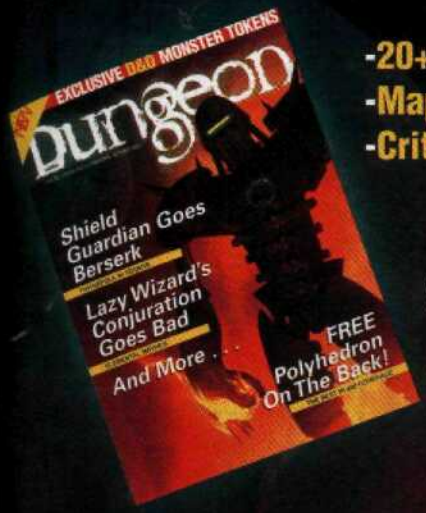
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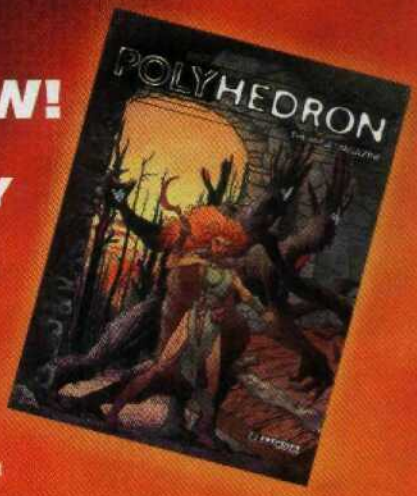

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SHADES OF DEATH

NECROMANCER CLASS COMBINATIONS

by Wade Nudson · illustrated by Peter Bergting

To many, the word necromancy evokes images of shrouded dread and undead terrors. These assumptions help to propagate the common perception of necromancers as evil beings who animate soulless creatures, robbing them of an afterlife for purely selfish reasons. Some say Necromancy is the vilest of the black arts, the darkest of all the magical schools, and that to even think about it is to be tempted to wickedness. In truth, Necromancy is no more dangerous than any other school of magic. It focuses on the study of death and the forces that can hold a soul in immortal balance, caught in perpetual undeath.

Necromancers are adept at manipulating these forces and relationships, and many learn to create or control undead creatures. Each necromancer must decide how he wants to use his powers. Does he raise undead armies to guard his tower, to set upon his enemies, and to hunt wayward travelers? Or does he respect the wishes of the dead, allowing them to complete unfinished tasks in return for protection and aid? Does he use his powers to further his own twisted ambitions, or does he use them to help those on both sides of the curtain of life who are in need?

The Black Path

In the eyes of most, Necromancy is evil, and many who call themselves necromancers are indeed selfish and corrupt. These necromancers have no compunction about the wills or wishes of departed souls and would gladly bind a family member's spirit to a spittoon if it suited their needs. Evil necromancers are renowned for sending forth undead to conquer and pillage, for reanimating and twisting the heroes sent to bring them down, and for infesting the mazes below their fortresses with flesh-hungry horrors. They generally care nothing for the undead servants they create, knowing that creating another such servant is but a corpse away.

Lawful Evil: No doubt the most dangerous and sinister of all necromancers, these villains have a plan. Their control over the undead is a tool that they use to terrorize the societies unlucky enough to be near them. They can wait patiently for decades, watching their foes perish only to raise them up again and send them against their own children. They create undead from defeated enemies, sending these minions to attack the source of such resistance as examples of the strength and power of Necromancy. Lawful evil necromancers use their undead as tools to accomplish their goals. Of the evil necromancers, these foul creatures are most likely to work together, as long as the pecking order is clearly established. Apprentices would do well to train under such a master.

Neutral Evil: Where lawful evil necromancers use methodical plans and cunning, neutral evil necromancers use their powers to fulfill selfish goals, taking a far less pragmatic or long-term view. Of course, selfish isn't sloppy, and neutral evil necromancers are careful and precise in the practice of their art. Their goals are primarily their own, not that of some society or group, and only rarely might such a necromancer work with others of his kind. Neutral evil necromancers do not announce themselves to neighboring villages by sending ranks of skeletons to invade. Rather, they enter themselves, covered by pitch-black cloaks, moving swiftly and silently through the populace. A single undead, hidden in a closet, can be used like a precision instrument, striking at exactly the right moment and then crumbling to dust. This is the mark of a master artisan.

Chaotic Evil: Chaotic evil necromancers use the aura of fear surrounding their art to intimidate and bully their way to the top of the food chain. Typically lazy, these necromancers have found that power corrupts, and absolute power attracts the corruptible. Why bother negotiating with intruders when you can send an undead horde against them? Why wait until your next experiment is dead before you begin? "Almost dead" is good enough. The henchmen of the chaotic evil necromancer frequently find themselves filling the ranks of the adjutant skeletons and zombies lurching about the halls. It does not bode well to make a mistake when serving such a master. Chaotic evil necromancers also use their undead as tools, but "the right tool for the job" makes no sense to them. They'd use a sledgehammer to fix a crack in a *crystal ball*. Bigger and more powerful undead are always better.

The Gray Path

Neutral necromancers have stranger views than evil ones, but they at least have goals that most civilized folk can appreciate. Neutral necromancers generally see themselves as pragmatists. They are capable of acts that seem unspeakably evil, but once you examine the causes, you see that such acts are just and equitable, if perhaps a bit

cold-hearted. Neutral necromancers understand that death and decay are as much parts of life as birth and growth. They understand that for life to flourish, limbs must be cut, herds must be thinned, and corpses must rot to provide nourishment for the fungus underneath. The undead have a no more strange or different existence than the living or dead. Each has a purpose to serve, and the neutral necromancer only seeks to facilitate the relationships between life and death.

Lawful Neutral: Lawful neutral necromancers adhere to strict rules about raising undead creatures. Sometimes this code is imprinted upon them by their cultural norms, but lawful neutral necromancers must sometimes choose not to cling to societal norms as a whole, knowing what they do is necessary, but understanding their art is not widely accepted. Within their science, they have their own ethical code that supports them and gives them direction. Some only deal in the corpses of criminals, others only in the bodies of fallen foes. Whatever the code, the undead created or controlled serve the lawful neutral necromancer unfailingly, or they are instantly destroyed. The lawful neutral necromancer abhors seeing unfettered undead, knowing well the damage they are capable of. If he cannot bring them under his control, he will do what he can to destroy them.

True Neutral: True neutral necromancers fully commit themselves to neutrality. They have no other choice. The temptations of the strength and power their abilities could bring them are balanced against the desire to stand true against extremism and prejudices of folk ignorant of their careful path. Choosing to study the necromantic arts, the neutral necromancer willingly places himself on a narrow line between evil manipulation of negative energies and the church-funded fanatics who seek out and slay anything with even a hint of evil taint attached to it. It is perhaps the true neutral necromancers who best understand that knowledge is a tool, nothing more and nothing less.

Chaotic Neutral: Some study the necromantic arts as a means to power, some study the arts to better battle evil undead, working to destroy or control unfettered walking corpses, and some study the necromantic arts because they think it might be fun. Chaotic neutral necromancers see their power as a path to liberation; easy labor you don't have to pay or feed. They create undead on a whim, and once the immediate goal has been achieved, they either destroy, entomb, or free their minions as they see fit. They have no attachment to societies or organizations, and they rarely link themselves to a single tower or laboratory. The nomads of the art, these spellcasters are the ones most often responsible for the single errant skeletons wandering through deserted fields or forests; a necromancer needed a hole dug, and then set the skeleton loose once the work was done.

The White Path

Without a doubt the most unusual spellcasters, good necromancers are very few and far between. They live apart from more mundane societies, knowing that only a few people can grasp the complexities of the necromantic arts enough to see beyond their capability for evil. Good necromancers prepare spells to heal their undead allies, and they often spend enough time with intelligent individual undead creatures to get to know them. They never use undead simply as expendable shock troops or walking trap detectors. As rare as good necromancers are, rarer still are the ones who don't wince a bit when one of their creations falls.

Other good necromancers study the art as a part of the "know thy enemy" philosophy. These are the ones who are near fanatical in their need to seek out and destroy the evil necromancers who abuse their powers. They fight fire with fire to bring evil to its knees.

Lawful Good: Lawful good necromancers are usually militant, dedicated to stamping out those who use Necromancy for evil deeds. Rather than count on a vast horde of lowly skeletons, they create a few undead troops, empowered by as many spells and enhancements as they are capable of casting. These spellcasters move with their undead allies, bolstering and supporting the creatures with spells and items. The undead of a lawful good necromancer are often organized in military-like groups, with commanders reporting to the necromancer and relaying orders to the lower level adjutants.

Neutral Good: Neutral good necromancers range from comical to insane. They often employ undead servants for mundane tasks, such as chopping wood or hauling goods. Neutral good necromancers realize that many of the physical hardships that the living must suffer through can be done easily with undead workers, and they often forget or ignore the many unpleasant attributes of undead. Digging latrines, dredging swamps, hauling massive stone blocks for the temple, all are jobs that can be done swiftly and easily with the proper work force. Neutral good necromancers aren't afraid to send their minions into battle, as long as it is in order to help out someone in need. They don't go looking for trouble, but they don't mind settling it. They view undead as tools and resources.

Chaotic Good: Chaotic good necromancers are the ones most likely to treat their undead as boon companions. Treating their creations with fairness and equality, they form a band of well-trained, well-behaved undead adventurers. Only a few bands such as this have ever existed, but the benefits of undeath cannot be overestimated when you are hunting down vampires, medusae, or other powerful monsters. Undead following the tutelage of chaotic good necromancers have, from time to time, branched out to fight evil on their own, merging with evil hordes and destroying them from the inside. These close-knit groups of intelligent undead surrounding chaotic good necromancers are truly a force to be reckoned with.

NEW FEATS

Necromancers focus their time and energy on the study of their magic. As such, they uncover uncommon abilities that set them apart from other spell casters. These spells and feats grant them unparalleled power in their chosen school, though often at the cost of lessened power in other magic schools. Some are reviled as evil incarnate for what they can do; others are praised as saviors. Still others walk among us, plot among us, and even choose from among us who to gift or burden with undeath.

Animation Mastery [General]

Your animations are exceptionally powerful.

Prerequisites: Improved Animation, Desecrated Animation, Spell Focus (Necromancy), 12+ ranks in Knowledge (religion).

Benefits: Undead you create using *animate dead* or the *create undead* spells gain maximum hit points and an additional +2 turn resistance.

Desecrated Animation [General]
Your animations are especially resistant to turning attempts.

Prerequisites: Ability to cast *desecrate*, 5+ ranks in Knowledge (religion)

Benefits: Undead creatures you create using *animate dead* or the *create undead* spells gain +2 turn resistance.

Improved Animation [General]
Your undead animations are unusually powerful.

Prerequisites: Spellcaster level 6th+, 5+ ranks in Knowledge (religion)

Benefits: Undead you create using *animate dead* or the *create undead* spells gain an additional Hit Die and a +1 competence bonus to attack and damage rolls.

Note: Undead do not gain an increase in size due to the increased Hit Dice from this feat.

Undead Legion [General]
You can control more undead than normal.

Prerequisites: Cha 13+, 5+ ranks in Knowledge (religion)

Benefit: You can create and control an additional 4 Hit Dice of undead creatures when casting the spell *animate dead*. If you are a cleric attempting to command undead by virtue of a turning check, you can control an additional 2 Hit Dice worth of undead creatures. Also, as a cleric who is attempting to control a single undead creature with more Hit Dice than you have levels, you may control a creature with 2 Hit Dice more than your cleric level without concentrating continuously.

Normal: Using *animate dead*, you can control only 2 Hit Dice worth of creatures per caster level. As a cleric using your control undead ability, you can only control any number of undead whose total Hit Dice do not exceed your level.

Greater Undead Legion [General]
You can control even greater numbers of undead.

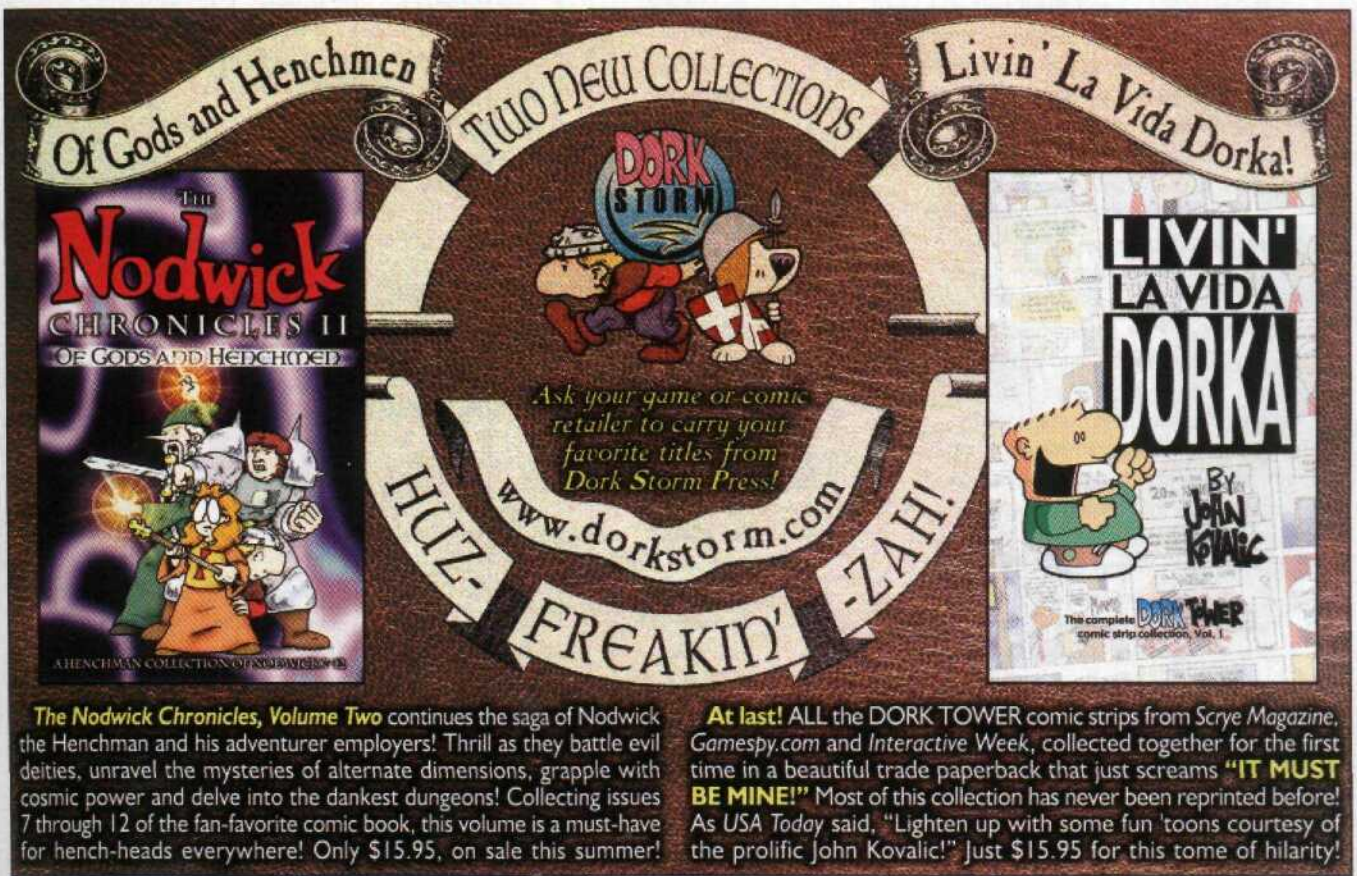
Prerequisites: Cha 15+, 10+ ranks in Knowledge (religion), Undead Legion

Benefit: You can create and control an additional 8 Hit Dice of undead creatures when casting the spell *animate dead*. If you are a cleric attempting to command undead by virtue of a turning check, you can control an additional 4 Hit Dice worth of undead creatures. Also, as a cleric who is attempting to command a single undead creature with more Hit Dice than you have levels, you may control a creature with 4 more Hit Dice than your cleric level without concentrating continuously.

Special: The effects of this feat replace (and do not stack with) those of Undead Legion.

CLASS COMBOS

The following class concepts show how the necromancer (specialist wizard) class can be combined with other classes to portray diverse characters. Just from the brief discussion of alignments early in the article, you can tell that there are a tremendous number of other possibilities. If you create a great new necromancer character concept (whether it's a new class combo or not), be sure to share your ideas on the *DRAGON* message boards at **www.wizards.com**.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PALE COMMANDER

The pale commander mixes martial prowess with arcane Necromancy, producing a fighter who is more than willing to lead her team of undead minions into battle. The pale commander's greatest strength is her ability to raise new troops after any battle. This continuous supply of troops makes the pale commander a tenacious opponent.

Character Choices

Pale commanders combine the fighter and wizard classes with the spellsword and pale master prestige classes (both from *Tome and Blood*), and their level progression typically follows one path at a time. Most of their training is devoted to their studies as a wizard and pale master.

Since they never gain more than two skill points per level during any of their training, and because their skills don't overlap until they begin taking levels of spellsword and pale master, only pale commanders with the intelligence to concentrate simultaneously on several fields of study have the aptitude to become pale commanders. Once they begin their training as spellcasters, pale commanders begin taking ranks in Concentration, Knowledge (arcana), Knowledge (religion) and Spellcraft. This allows them to fulfill the requirements of their prestige classes as early as possible, while also giving them access to the more advanced necromantic feats.

Pale commanders need to take the Skill Focus (Knowledge [religion]) feat before 10th level in order to qualify for the pale master prestige class. Other feats often taken by pale commanders include Combat Casting and Spell Focus (Necromancy). Pale commanders tend to focus on Necromancy, and most become specialist necromancers.

At lower levels, pale commanders often use enchanted mithral shirts or elven chain, foregoing their bonemail and relying on their ability to ignore arcane spell failures. They use their spell channel I ability to lash out with *chill touch*, damaging their enemies and healing their undead minions. Pale commanders often choose the weakening and destructive touch attacks for the graft ability they gain as pale masters, finding that these two touch attacks make them even more formidable in melee combat.

PALE COMMANDER STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

(Compared to the single-classed wizard)

Advantages	Disadvantages
More hit points	Slower spell progression
Armor and weapon proficiencies	Can't cast highest-level spells
Two bonus fighter feats	Fewer wizard bonus feats
Better base attack	Weaker familiar
Better Fortitude saves	Less able to penetrate spell resistance
No spell failure (spellsword)	Less damaging offensive spells
Prestige class abilities	Shorter spell durations on most spells

PALE COMMANDER ADVANCEMENT

Character Level	Class Level	Base Attack	Fort/Ref/Will	Abilities Gained
1	Ftr 1	+1	+2/+0/+0	Martial weapons proficiency, bonus fighter feat
2	Ftr 2	+2	+3/+0/+0	Bonus fighter feat
3	Ftr 2/Wiz 1	+2	+3/+0/+2	Feat, Scribe Scrolls feat, 0- and 1st-level spells, familiar
4	Ftr 2/Wiz 2	+3	+3/+0/+3	Ability bonus
5	Ftr 2/Wiz 3	+3	+4/+1/+3	2nd-level spells
6	Ftr 2/Wiz 4	+4	+4/+1/+4	Feat
7	Ftr 2/Wiz 5	+4	+4/+1/+4	Bonus wizard feat, 3rd-level spells
8	Ftr 2/Wiz 5/ SplSwd 1	+4	+6/+1/+6	Ability bonus, channel spell I
9	Ftr 2/Wiz 5/ SplSwd 2	+5	+7/+1/+7	Feat, ignore spell failure 10%
10	Ftr 2/ Wiz 5/ SplSwd 3	+6/+1	+7/+2/+7	Ignore spell failure 15%
11	Ftr 2/ Wiz5/ SplSwd 3/PM 1	+6/+1	+9/+2/+9	Bonemail +2, 4th-level spells
12	Ftr 2/Wiz 5/ SplSwd 3/PM 2	+7/+2	+10/+2/+10	Feat, ability bonus, *animate dead*
13	Ftr 2/Wiz 5/ SplSwd 3/PM 3	+7/+2	+10/+3/+10	Darkvision
14	Ftr 2/Wiz 5/ SplSwd 3/PM 4	+8/+3	+11/+3/+11	Summon undead, bonemail +4
15	Ftr 2/Wiz 5/ SplSwd 3/PM 5	+8/+3	+11/+3/+11	Feat, deathless vigor, 5th-level spells
16	Ftr 2/Wiz 5/ SplSwd 3/PM 6	+9/+4	+12/+4/+12	Ability bonus, undead graft
17	Ftr 2/Wiz 5/ SplSwd 3/PM 7	+9/+4	+12/+4/+12	Tough as bone
18	Ftr 2/Wiz 5/ SplSwd 3/PM 8	+10/+5	+13/+4/+13	Feat, graft upgrade, bonemail +6
19	Ftr 2/Wiz 5/ SplSwd 3/PM 9	+10/+5	+13/+5/+13	Summon greater undead, 6th-level spells
20	Ftr 2/Wiz 5/ SplSwd 3/PM 10	+11/+6/+1	+14/+5/+14	Ability bonus, deathless mastery

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LEE MOYER 02

SAVAGE SHAMAN

The savage shaman rises from the ranks of barbarian tribes and humanoid hordes as one who is attuned to the movements and wills of his ancestors. He is trained as a shaman, mixing mystical learning with the physical skills and prowess of his people. Once he has a full command of the spells and skills necessary, he is introduced to his ancestral spirits. He learns to call upon them as he leads his people into battle. His physical skills, divine spells, and the support of his angry forefathers make him a fearsome opponent.

Savage shamans quickly rise to positions of leadership within their clans. Their strength and power leaves little room for dissension.

Character Choices

The savage shaman usually chooses the Death and Destruction domains and opts to channel negative energy, thus, most are evil or at least neutral. They often pick combat spells, knowing they can use their spontaneous casting ability to cast *inflict wounds* spells to aid their undead companions in battle. They generally keep their ranks in Concentration and Spellcraft high, while spending enough skill points on Knowledge (religion) to keep their ancestors compliant. When they join the warpriest prestige class, they opt for the domination domain.

Savage shamans often take advantage of necromantic feats (see the new feats described earlier in this article) to help bolster and support the spirits they summon and undead they create. Common feats for the savage shaman include Improved Undead Command, Greater Undead Command, or Improved Animation.

In order to gain access to the warpriest prestige class, savage shamans need to take the Leadership feat and Combat Casting feat before gaining 15th level.

The savage shaman career path combines the barbarian/cleric combination with the master of shrouds and warpriest prestige classes (both from *Defenders of the Faith*).

SAVAGE SHAMAN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

(Compared to the single-classed cleric)

Advantages	Disadvantages
More hit points (on average)	Slower spell progression
Better base attack bonus	Does not gain most powerful spells
Better Fortitude saves	Less effective turn (or rebuke) undead ability
Martial weapon proficiency	Heavy armor negates barbarian speed
Rage and uncanny dodge	Less able to penetrate spell resistance
Master of shrouds class abilities	Less damaging offensive spells
Warpriest class abilities	Shorter spell durations

SAVAGE SHAMAN ADVANCEMENT

Character Level	Class Level	Base Attack	Fort/Ref/Will	Abilities Gained
1	Brb 1	+1	+2/+0/+0	Weapon and armor prof., rage 1/day, fast movement
2	Brb 1/ Clr 1	+1	+4/+0/+2	1st-level spells, turning
3	Brb 1/ Clr 2	+2	+5/+0/+3	Feat
4	Brb 1/ Clr 3	+3	+5/+1/+3	Ability increase, 2nd-level spells
5	Brb 2/ Clr 3	+4	+6/+1/+3	Uncanny dodge
6	Brb 2/ Clr 4	+5	+7/+1/+4	Feat
7	Brb 2/ Clr 5	+5	+7/+1/+4	3rd-level spells
8	Brb 3/ Clr 5	+6/+1	+7/+2/+5	Ability increase
9	Brb 3/ Clr 5/ MShrd 1	+7/+2	+7/+2/+7	Feat, Extra Turning
10	Brb 3/ Clr 5/ MShrd 2	+8/+3	+7/+2/+8	4th-level spells
11	Brb 3/ Clr 5/ MShrd 3	+9/+4	+8/+3/+8	*summon undead I*
12	Brb 3/Clr 5/ MShrd 4	+10/+5	+8/+3/+9	Feat, ability increase, 5th-level spells
13	Brb 3/Clr 5/ MShrd 4/ WP 1	+11/+6/+1	+10/+3/+9	Prestige domain, rally
14	Brb 3/Clr 5/ MShrd 5/ WP 1	+12/+7/+2	+10/+3/+9	*summon undead II*
15	Brb 3/ Clr 5/ MShrd 6/ WP 1	+13/+8/+3	+11/+4/+10	Feat, 6th-level spells
16	Brb 3/ Clr 5/ MShrd 7/ WP 1	+14/+9/+4	+11/+4/+10	Ability increase, *summon undead III*
17	Brb 3/ Clr 5/ MShrd 8/ WP 1	+15/+10/+5	+11/+4/+11	7th-level spells
18	Brb 3/ CLr 5/ MShrd 8/ WP 2	+16/+11/+6/+1	+12/+4/+11	Feat, inflame
19	Brb 3/ Clr 5/ MShrd 9/ WP 2	+17/+12/+7/+2	+13/+5/+11	8th-level spells
20	Brb 3/ Clr 5/ MShrd 10/ WP 2	+18/+13/+8/+3	+13/+5/+12	Ability increase, *summon undead IV*

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Living Greyhawk™ JOURNAL

Issue Number Fourteen • Reaping, 592 CY

A Publication of the RPGA Network
Editor: Erik Mona • Campaign Director: Stephen Radney-MacFarland
Enlightenment can penetrate even the helm of iron—Cuthbertine proverb

CAMPAIGN NEWS

News from the Top

Our bi-monthly round-up of RPGA Network news and information usually appears in *Polyhedron*, our sister publication. This month, however, we've got very important news that simply can't wait for the next *Polyhedron*. I apologize for interrupting your regularly scheduled Living Greyhawk *Campaign News*, but I trust you'll agree that the following information is worth it.

So what could be so important?

In our bid to continue to offer better games for more members, the RPGA has dropped ALL membership fees as of the time you read this. For those of you now leaping around looking for the telephone number of HQ as you just paid us renewal money, I ask you to first please read on, as I suspect you'll like what I have to say.

To address and thank those members who have joined, renewed, or have multi-year memberships, we are working with Chessex, a leading manufacturer of gaming aids and accessories, to develop an RPGA Network member-exclusive vinyl Battlemat that will be sent free of charge to all RPGA Network members who joined prior to July 1, 2002.

Measuring 23 1/2 in. by 26 in., the new RPGA Battlemats feature a one-inch square grid suitable for Dungeons & Dragons miniature play. The Battlemats will be available for collection at both the US and UK Gen Cons. Thereafter, we will mail all remaining qualifying members their Battlemats at absolutely no charge.

Is that the only good news? Not hardly.

I promised in *Polyhedron* #151 that I would release additional information regarding our brand-new DM Training program as that program was developed. I'm pleased to inform you that stage one of that program will be live by the time you read this. I'd like to offer a huge thanks to all those who have contributed to setting up this important initiative in such a short period of time.

The entry level in the new DM program is known as Herald level. To qualify as a Herald-level DM, new members must pass a simple test of basic table managment skills administered via the rpga.com website.

This and future tests for higher judge levels have been designed to help DMs deal with situations that occasionally arise during Network-sanctioned games (what to do when a player cheats, when a die rolls off the table, or even when a player falls asleep!). The entry-level Herald test is available now. New members must take the test to qualify to order RPGA scenarios, including Living Greyhawk adventures.

Current members in good standing retain their existing judge ranking (and the ability to order scenarios). Once we've rolled out the complete program, higher level judges might have to sustain their current ranking through participation and/or additional tests, but that's a ways off.

Members who joined prior to July 1st, 2002 but who do not have an existing judge rating may continue to order scenarios as normal. Once the full program is in swing, however, such members will be required to maintain a DM rank at the minimum level to retain that ability.

We're initiating this new program because we feel it will improve the play experience of all RPGA members by giving Network DMs a common set of "best practices." In doing so, we hope to create a corps of superb Dungeon Masters. Give it a little time, and we're certain you'll agree.

For now, may the goddess Tymora [or in this case, Rudd—ed.] shine upon d20s everywhere.

Ian Richards
Worldwide RPGA Director
ianr@wizards.com

Gen Con UK to Host Special Events

The RPGA Network is happy to announce that this year's Gen Con UK, taking place August 29 to September 1 at the Olympia 2 in London, will feature

both a Living Greyhawk Open Regional Slot, and the special *Isle of Woe* event set to debut at this year's Origins Game Expo about the time you read this.

The Living Greyhawk Open Regional slot premiered at Winter Fantasy 2002, where hundreds of Living Greyhawk players sunk their teeth into a single slot of Regional adventures from across the states and around the world run by Dungeon Masters from those home regions.

Now, it's Europe's turn!

The Open Regional Slot is the only place that DMs can run a home regional adventure away from the real-world geographic region they are from. For an event to qualify, it must be a single-round Living Greyhawk event, and the DM must be an RPGA Network member in good standing and a resident of the Living Greyhawk region featured in the adventure. And yes, U.S. and other military servicepeople stationed abroad can run adventures from the region of their permanent residence.

And if that weren't enough Greyhawk fun, Gen Con UK is also the second site for the *Isle of Woe* special event. Like the Origins Games Expo 2002 version of the event, the UK version features Dwarven Forge MasterMaze pieces for the dungeon works, graciously donated by the UK game store Hidden Fortress, which is co-sponsoring the event.

If you are interested in attending Gen Con UK, check www.genconuk.com.

The Curse of Tristor

It seems there is a Rhennee curse on the town of Tristor. The slated June re-release of the 2000 member-exclusive adventure has been delayed, due to some logistic issues. But, by the end of 2002, RPGA Network members will again have the opportunity to delve into the mysteries of a superstitious village in the heart of the famously intolerant Theocracy of the Pale.

The re-release of the *Fright at Tristor* Living Greyhawk home play adventure, when it occurs, will give RPGA gamemasters the ability to order the adventure for home play. The new version of the event features an Adventure Certificate, instructions on how to run the adventure as a non-standard event (that is, longer than a typical five-hour slot adventure), and how to increase the challenge of the adventure to 3-6 levels of play. It also will give RPGA Network Dungeon Masters the ability to order hard copies of the adventure—which made its exclusive premiere more than two years ago—for $9.95 U.S. (while supplies last). If you missed out on the *Fright at Tristor* the first time around, you'll definitely want to take notice of this new offer. Keep your eyes on the RPGA website (www.wizards.com/rpga) for more details about Tristor's rebirth.

The RPGA has dropped ALL membership fees as of the time you read this.

Two Important Adventures to Debut at Gen Con 2002

Polish your sword and dust off the spellbooks—this year's Gen Con and Gen Con UK are set to feature two highly anticipated adventures—COR2-09: *Final Reckoning*, a conclusion to the series of adventures featuring everyone's favorite miscreant, Auldon Brendingund, and COR2-10: *Forgotten Echoes*, the much-feared follow-up to last year's smash adventure by Chris Tulach and Jason Bulmahn, noted masters of the Living Greyhawk beat-down.

In *Final Reckoning*, by Sean Flaherty and John Richardson, your characters are tasked by Greyhawk City's Church of Pelor to help undo the taint of evil unwittingly unleashed by the Brendingund paterfamilias. After all he has done, can Auldon be redeemed?

Not even the healing spells of Pelor's priests can save you from the insane voice in your head—that familiar voice is back again, the one that whispered to you deep in the Vesve forest, and it's telling you that it is now free. Can you put an end to the *Forgotten Echoes?*

Both Gen Cons will feature a third Living Greyhawk adventure: COR2-11: *Escape from Tehn*, by David Christ and Stephen Radney-MacFarland. In that event, the story that started with the *Isles of Woe* takes a dangerous turn, as its legacy erupts from the splintered duchy. Your only chance for escape is a running fight to the banks of the Artonsamay River.

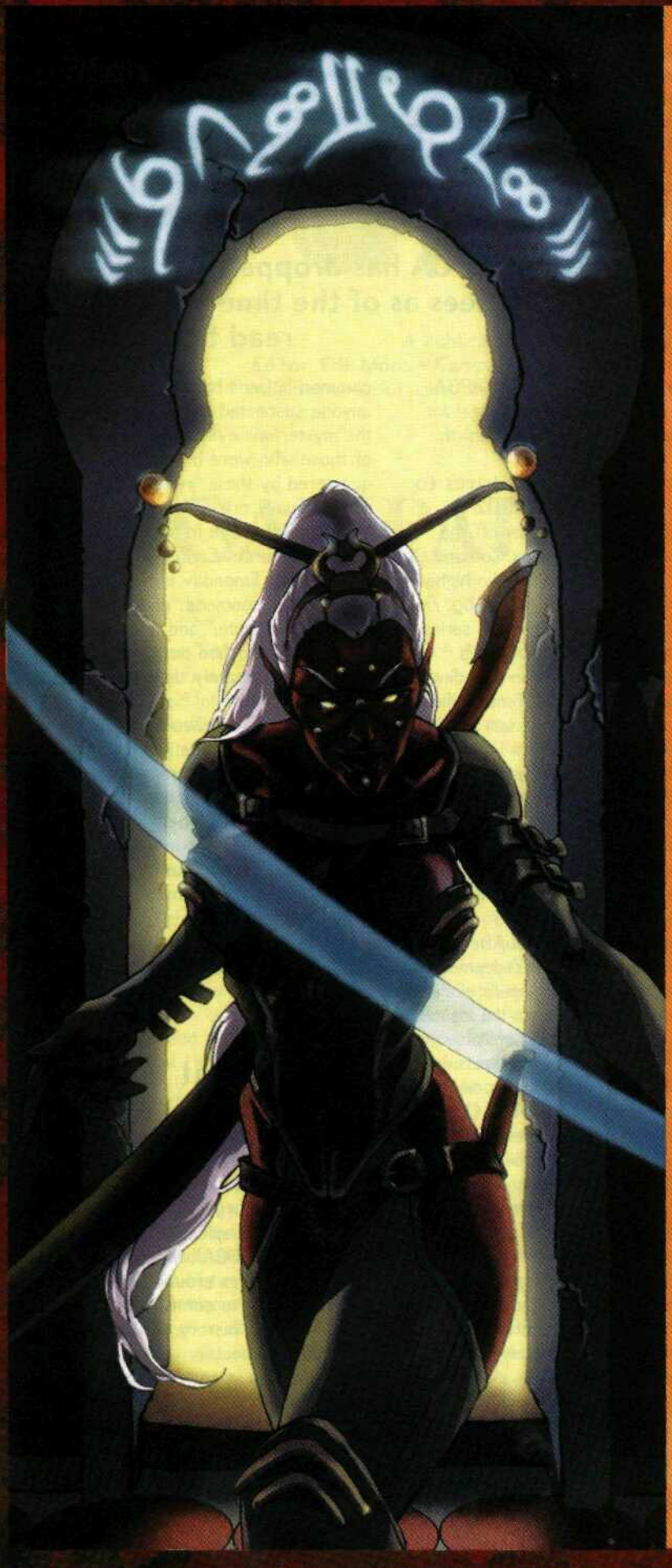
Troubling Resurgence of Drow in Sterich

A troubling encounter with some disguised black-skinned elves in Istivin has the people of that recaptured and recovering city on edge. With reports that adventurers have discovered a small drow enclave under the city, that paranoia has turned to murderous insanity. No fewer than five vigilante killings have taken place over the last fortnight, as adventurers and even common citizens have taken to killing anyone suspected to be in league with the mysterious evil elves. While none of those who were brutally drawn and quartered by these "revenge mobs" were actually drow, the authorities are turning a blind eye to such sickening citizen outbursts. Even Marchioness Resbin Dren Emondav is said to have called the phenomena "understandable, if not unfortunate," and is said to be making plans to find out more about the danger currently threatening the capital.

The *Gloom and Disunion Cycle*, which started with the adventure COR2-04: *Birthday Bash*, and continued with COR2-05: *Behind the Veil*, marches on this October with COR2-13: *Bridge Over Svartjet*, in which characters delve deep into the Underdark in an attempt to ascertain the true nature of the threat to Istivin.

What is Living Greyhawk?

Living Greyhawk is the largest, most popular shared-world Dungeons & Dragons campaign in the history of gaming. Run under the auspices of the RPGA Network (RPGA), the campaign offers gamers around the world the chance to contribute to the developing history of Oerth by playing specially constructed adventures at conventions, game days, or in the comfort of home. For more information on how you can get involved in the campaign, visit **www.livinggreyhawk.com**



THE

by Frederick Weining

illustrated by Kalman Andrasofszky

cartography by Christopher West

Ages ago, in the youth of their race, a fundamental discord divided the elves into two opposing camps. On the side of goodness and light were the majority of olvenfolk, who were filled with a joyous and life-embracing spirit. But there were others, those whose natures were fettered with wickedness and cruelty; and they loved the darkness, for their deeds were evil.

So the goodly elves shunned their evil kindred and drove them out from their communities, denying their kinship and naming them drow. The two sides made war upon each other, but good was ever victorious over evil; at last, shamed and defeated, the drow retreated altogether from the sunlit lands of the surface to take refuge in the dark recesses of the underworld.

The most evil and ambitious of these drow venerated the demoness Lolth, Queen of the Spiders; and they, having imbibed of her venemous ichor, became the nobles of their kind. By demon-endowed fertility the drow multiplied and grew strong again in the underworld, their race born anew and nurtured in the balm of darkness. The drow themselves became dark, in flesh as in spirit, hating the light and all who dwelled in it.

Females of the noble blood waxed powerful in the service of Lolth, ruling their people with cruelty and cunning, leading the race of dark elves ever deeper through lightless caverns and black passages. In the grandest of all the deep caverns they built their principal city, palaces for their nobles, and a great fane for their goddess and her priesthood. Thus they created their own subterranean realm, a gloomy fairyland in which to practice all the perverse arts cherished by Lolth.

At last, rumor of their enduring evil has risen once more to trouble the lands above, speaking of strange elves as dark as the faeries are bright. If any would seek the truth of these tales, let

VAULT OF THE DROW

DARK ELF METROPOLIS

(Based on out-of-print material by Gary Gygax and Monte Cook)

them take the perilous road to the world below, that they may behold with their own eyes that terrifying and magnificent homeland of the dark elves: the Vault of the Drow.

The Last Testament of Algorthas the Seer
Councilor Emeritus to the Royal Court of Sterich at Istivin,
588 CY

THE VAULT OF THE DROW

Deep beneath the mighty Hellfurnace Mountains lies the Vault of the Drow, an immense hemispherical cyst in Oerth's crust over six miles long and nearly as broad. Its mineral-veined ceiling rises more than 1000 fathoms above its crystal-strewn floor; near the zenith of the dome is a huge mass of tumkeoite, which as it slowly decays and transforms into lacofcite glows like a ghostly, plum-colored moon in the firmament of the Vault, while other phosphorescent nodes dimly gleam like stars in the same stony heaven. The lights of this subterranean sky reflect in the dark waters of the Pitchy Flow and the Weeping Spring, and the image of the whole strange canopy is trapped and distorted within the Mere of Glooms.

Many passages and trails wind throughout the underworld, but one road enters the Vault through a fissure in its southern wall. The road descends through a gorge about 200 yards wide, which gradually becomes broader as it goes north. A full mile from the entrance, an ancient stronghold called the Black Tower stands four stories high, watching over the Underdark road. The tower's foundations rest upon a steep-sided mound of stone, its massive walls worn smooth by the passing of ages, almost fused with the natural rock platform upon which the tower was built.

A narrow incline leads up to the Black Tower—all visitors are required to report there, for it serves as a checkpoint and customhouse for foreigners entering the Vault. All non-drow are questioned regarding the purpose of their visit, and those deemed acceptable are issued a cloak of silk dyed an unnatural shade of green, which they must wear to identify themselves as aliens in the drow homeland. Interlopers who lack the special cloak soon find themselves killed or enslaved by the many drow patrols that range the Lower Vault.

An enormous natural antechamber to the Vault opens perhaps two miles west of the Black Tower. Its entrance is walled and gated, with six strong towers along its length. Behind this wall is the fortress of the military sisterhood of the Vault, a society of female drow warriors sponsored by each of the eight noble houses, but who swear allegiance only to Lolth. Nearly two and a half miles to the northeast of the Black Tower is a walled compound that serves as the stronghold of the military brotherhood of the Vault, a society of male drow warriors in service to Lolth, which is financed by the sixteen merchant clans who dwell in the Lower Vault.

The strongholds of these merchant clans are walled villas scattered throughout the Lower Vault. Disturbing forests and thickets of fungi grow between the sixteen merchant villas here, all on a floor of jagged rocks and jutting formations of crystal. To the north, by the banks of the Pitchy Flow, the black-walled city of Erelhei-Cinlu stands as a gateway to the Upper Vault. A plateau occupied by eight noble estates stands across a leering span called the Flying Bridge on the other side of the river. Further still is a guarded passageway leading to

the temple chamber of the Demon Queen of Spiders, called Lolth's Egg. The enormous red and green ochre cavern holds an accursed pagoda-like spider temple, the infamous Great Fane of Lolth.

The mostly likely destination for adventurers travelling to the Vault of the Drow is Erelhei-Cinlu itself. Representatives of nearly any race might be found here, whether as visitor, resident, or captive; indeed, it is not unknown for one person to have each of these ranks at some point during his sojourn in Erelhei-Cinlu, and the city of the dark elves is always ready to tempt new visitors with all the arousements that darkness can offer.

ERELHEI-CINLU (eh-reel-hay-sen-loo)

Erelhei-Cinlu looks out like a degenerate lover upon the homeland of the drow, as it has for countless centuries. Within its black walls ferment all manner of evils, depravities, and addictions. A 30-foot high wall of black stone surrounds the city on the east, south and west, with eleven square towers placed at irregular intervals around its length. The wall to the north is fifty feet high and made of smooth, perfectly joined stone, which runs alongside the banks of the Pitchy Flow. Two gates, one to the south and one to the north, give access to the city (though only the southern "Great Gate" is open to non-drow); there are also a number of small doors in or near the walls, though these are spell-warded, locked, and concealed. A perimeter wall-walk links both the city gates and all eleven towers. Protected by crenelated battlements, the wall-walk crawls with groups of drow warriors on patrol.

ERELHEI-CINLU (Metropolis): Nonstandard; AL CE; 100,000 gp limit; Assets 135 million gp; Population 27,000; Demographic category (drow 40%, troglodytes 15%, bugbears 12%, others (surface dwellers and undead) 10%, mindflayers 4%, trolls 4%, yugoloths 4%, kuo-toa 3%, demons 3%, xvarts 2%, deep gnomes 1%, orcs 1%, gith races 1%).

Travelers enter Erelhei-Cinlu via the Great Gate, a broad stone structure four stories high crowned with rooftop battlements. Elaborate stone-carved figures of demons and monsters leer from the piled stones of the exterior, while the entryway holds four great warrior statues. The two larger of the quartet, the females, face each other across the entry arch, holding tall, narrow-bladed axes; the two smaller figures, the males, face out into the Vault, gripping their thin swords with both hands. A raised portcullis protects the Great Gate's interior passage on the southern end, and a large spiked bronze gate stands open to the north. Lurid frescoes of demon visages cover the interior walls, which cleverly conceal the arrow slits and murder holes that guard its length.

The Great Gate opens onto the High Street, which divides the eastern and western halves of the city. High Street runs generally north-south from the Great Gate to the Noble Gate. End Street crosses it running vaguely east-west; hence, the two branches are commonly called East End Street and West End Street, respectively. All told there are eight sections, or ghettos, of Erelhei-Cinlu. Four patrols of male drow soldiers make hourly rounds on the main streets, while six patrols of female drow soldiers roam the back streets and alleys on a similar schedule.

The two main streets meet at the broad circle intersection of the Concourse, at the center of which stands a temple of Keptolo, the drow goddess of flattery, intoxication, rumor, and opportunism. A large arena pit opens in the circle's center, where performances of the most depraved acts serve as public spectacle. The guardian priests determine who enters the

Erelhei-Cinlu
City of Drow
WEST
1. Palace of Amalriv
2. Foreign Temples
3. Antisolar Institute
4. Spire of the Encyclic
5. Twilight Gallery
6. House of Abandonment
7. Acrobats' Terrace
8. Silver Stage
9. Ceremonial Arena
10. Yugoloth Barrack
11. Verdict Hall
12. Menagerie Square
13. Sarcoma Keep
14. Alabaster Slab
15. Necropolis Square
16. Great Gate
17. Noble Gate
Aisle of Scribes
Ghetto of Artisans
Player's Lane
Ghetto of Performers
West End Street
Concourse
Ghetto of Savages
Ghetto of the Dead
Dead End Street
Sentinel Street
Ghetto of Scholars
Ghetto of Foreigners
Street of Lies
High Street
East End Street
Ghetto of Outcasts
Blackrail Alley
Ghetto of Chattels
Yards
0 100 200 300 400 500 600 700 800 900 1000

Amalriv: Male drow Wiz19; CR 21; Medium-size humanoid; HD 19d4; hp 47; Init +6; Spd 30 ft.; AC 21 (touch 16, flat-footed 18); Atk +13/+8 melee (1d6+5, *+3 quarterstaff*); SQ Darkvision 120 ft., drow traits, SR 30; AL CE; SV Fort +7, Ref +9, Will +16; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 11, Int 23, Wis 18, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Alchemy +26, Concentration +12, Diplomacy +10, Disguise +10, Forgery +16, Hide +12, Knowledge (arcana) +28, Listen +11, Profession (trader) +26, Search +13, Spot +2; Brew Potion, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Rod, Craft Staff, Extend Spell, Improved Critical (quarterstaff), Improved Initiative, Quicken Spell, Scribe Scroll, Silent Spell, Still Spell.

Wizard Spells Prepared (4/6/6/5/5/5/4/3/3; base DC = 16 + spell level): 0—*daze* (2), *mage hand*, *read magic*; 1st—*charm person*, *identify*, *magic missile* (3), *shield*; 2nd—*darkness*, *knock*, *spectral hand*, *summon monster II*, *web* (2); 3rd—*fly*, *haste*, *hold person* (2), *vampiric touch*; 4th—*dimension door*, *improved invisibility*, *polymorph self*, *stoneskin* (2); 5th—*cone of cold* (2), *summon monster V*, *teleport*, *wall of iron*; 6th—*circle of death*, *disintegrate*, *flesh to stone*, *globe of invulnerability*, *repulsion*; 7th—*control undead*, *finger of death*, *limited wish*, *shadow walk*; 8th—*horrid wilting*, *maze*, *Otiluke's telekinetic sphere*; 9th—*gate*, *time stop*, *wail of the banshee*.

Possessions: +3 quarterstaff, ring of protection +4, rod of rulership, robe of the archmagi (black).

The so-called "tax baron" of the Ghetto of Foreigners, Amalriv is one of the most powerful permanent residents of Erelhei-Cinlu, and its wealthiest non-noble. Amalriv served house Eilservs for many years, but has since switched allegiances to Tormtor. Eclavdra's return complicates matters, for although he no longer serves the cleric, his long relationship with her and her family cannot be ignored. In his own right, Amalriv is the closest thing to a mayor the city can boast, and he loves Erelhei-Cinlu as only a drow can. A survivor and above all a pragmatist, Amalriv respects power and enjoys the misfortune of the weak and foolish.

central flesh-pit: only the most attractive or wealthy. Facing this pit from the south end of the Concourse, just before rising to intersect with the High Street, is the main sewer gate.

Many smaller streets and alleys wind and zig-zag between the city's buildings, but six are especially important in separating the eastern and western ghettos from each other. On the western side of the city, the Player's Lane separates the Performers and Artisans districts, while the Aisle of Scribes divides the Artisans and Scholars. Between the Scholars and Foreigners runs the Street of Lies. On the east, Sentinel Street twists its way in a long arc from Necropolis Square (with its memorial Well of Despair) to the North Wall, dividing the Tombs from the Savage Ghetto. From the eastern corner of Necropolis Square to the easternmost wall-tower crosses Dead End Street, separating the Tombs from the Beggar's district. Finally, cutting between the Beggar's Ghetto and the Chattel's Ghetto, is Blackrail Alley.

The Noble Gate marks the far end of the High Street. It stands out against the towerless northern wall as a final defense, not for the city, but to protect the wealthy properties to the north from the dregs of Erelhei-Cinlu. The gatehouse stands six stories high, built with a set of double gates protected from each side with portcullises and topped with crenelated battlements on the roof and the wall balcony overlooking the city. The southern archway of the gate, facing the city, features a haunting carving of Lolth in her spider form, while the Queen of Spiders in the guise of a regally attired drow noblewoman leers from the northern arch. Two small towers extend from this arch to watch over the Flying Bridge to the north, which leads to the noble manors on the plateau of the Upper Vault.

City dwellings range from abject squalor to sumptuous excess and are crowded together in a chaotic welter of different shapes, sizes, and styles. Its streets and alleyways are crooked and narrow, named by signs carved into elaborate plaques, or crudely etched into the building walls. Many such signs are outlined in phosphorescent chemicals or illuminated by glowing lichens or fire beetle cages.

Though no real order prevails inside the dark elven city, its eight ghettos are historically associated with the eight noble houses. The nobles have the right to tax the inhabitants of their related ghetto, but even this is not performed in any organized manner, for the tax collectors—despised by both their masters and their subjects—seek only to enrich themselves. In turn, the collectors are normally assassinated (again, whether by master or subject, it matters little) and replaced

after only a brief time in office. Yet, since they employ the greatest number of hirelings (notably mercenary guards), they provide a boon to the economy of the city. They do so even in death, for tax collectors traditionally are honored with expensive funerals by their masters, and even more expensive funeral celebrations by friends and foes.

The life of the city goes on otherwise in an almost timeless cycle of pleasure, pain, and oblivion. A civil war in recent years has not changed this; indeed, most of the casualties of that war came from among the nobles, or the servants and soldiers of their houses. The inhabitants of Erelhei-Cinlu, long inured to bloody conflict, treated the civil war as merely another murder-spree; knowing how to hide themselves, they cast only a few of their own before the blade to distract the blood-lust of the nobles.

With the cessation of internecine strife, the common citizens of Erelhei-Cinlu have returned to their chosen professions and turned their attention to their favored victims: each other. Visitors from the surface are also choice targets, but they are often too dangerous for any but the most skilled or powerful drow to prey upon.

THE GHETTO OF FOREIGNERS

Most humans resident in Erelhi-Cinlu live in the Ghetto of Foreigners, which teems with run-down dwellings for both permanent and transitory visitors from the surface world. The establishments found here reflect this in many ways: the use of light, far more prevalent here than in any other part of the Vault; the presence of foreign temples, for no outside deities are permitted worship elsewhere in the drow realm (and even here they are treated as just another business catering to non-drow); and even the food and drink are made to better suit surface tastes, though more exotic fare is always available for a price.

Foreign Temples

The Foreigner's Ghetto is home to the only temples of non-drow gods allowed in the Vault. All are located along the Street of Lies, over the entrance of which stands a tall, gated arch covered with a relief of the demoness Lolth. Indeed a shrine to the Queen of the Spiders lies just within the gate, and tradition dictates that all visitors make a nominal offering of silver as they enter.

The first foreign temple is that of Nerull, who is well respected in the underworld (particularly among assassins and executioners). The next is a small temple to the god Boccob, frequented mostly by wizards from the surface world, but whose clerics are on good terms with a modest number of drow scholars and sages. A similarly sized temple dedicated to Ralishaz stands further along the Street of Lies, the bane and boon of those addicted to gambling. A well-appointed sanctum of Incabulos, popular with both drow and non-drow (most notably poisoners) comes next, just before similar structures dedicated to Erythnul, Beltar, and Raxivort.

A black ziggurat temple of Tharizdun sits at the turn of the street, although it serves as more of a museum than an active house of worship. Finally, near the end of the street sits a large group of one- and two-story buildings connected by pillar-lined courtyards, a motley assembly that serves as a place of worship dedicated to the lich god Vecna. Many drow scholars, as well as evil human wizards, sorcerers, and visiting liches frequent this bizarre complex.

Palace of Amalriv

The home and private fortress of the most successful tax collector in Erelhei-Cinlu rises seven stories above the city streets. The round, multi-domed edifice of puce-colored stone squats at the junction of Squander and Salvage, near the very center of the Foreigner's Ghetto. The palace was briefly put under siege during the civil war a few years ago, but proved impenetrable despite some damage to the outer facing.

Currently, the lower two floors of the palace see much traffic, for Amalriv also acts as a pawnbroker and moneylender for the entire ghetto. Common sorts of goods are readily available here, including adventuring gear, weapons, and clothing. Amalriv stocks second-hand goods particular to the Vault, such as the red eye cusps worn by some experienced visitors and various fungal ointments used by hunters, which otherwise must be custom made by a skilled artisan.

Amalriv also offers loans, usually with severe terms that would be illegal in any normal city. His yugoloth bondsmen are quite relentless in their collection activities, and the tax collector's relationship with the city's impressive vampiric community gives him connections even on the surface. In fact, he is rumored to have a vampire harem on one of the upper floors of his palace, but visitors are not invited there and intruders may never leave.

Establishments

The ghetto features many bordellos, casinos, and taverns (or combinations thereof) suitable for the pursuit of any common vice found among the surface races. Games and competitions of every kind are available, from cards and dice to races and combat, and anything in between. The most popular gambling house is the Demon's Draw Casino, a broad, four-story edifice on Serpent Street.

Other gambling establishments include the Black Widow (bordello, casino, and inn), the Dragon's Hoard, the Turning Wheel, and Gengar's Blade, the latter known for its hard liquor and bloodsport. Famous bordellos include the aforementioned Black Widow, the Green Door, the Serpent's Charm (which employs a group of medusa paramours for select clientele), and the Dreampearl, infamous for its free use of dangerous potions and elixirs.

The list of taverns and inns found in the Foreigner's Ghetto is vast, but two are imminently suitable for first-time visitors. The Deep, on Haze Avenue, and the Far Night, an inn and tavern located on Stranger Road. Both are owned and operated by humans who maintain their own security forces and keep the local drow patrols well bribed. Though these establishments are far from safe, the proprietors strive to keep good relations with others from the surface world.

THE GHETTO OF SCHOLARS

Located next to the Ghetto of Foreigners, the Ghetto of Scholars is the next most common destination of travellers from the surface. Indeed some of the savants and scholars found here are human, or once-human, and the language of almost any race can be heard somewhere within the ghetto's confines. Tutors in any of the arcane professions

Iiscul: Male mind flayer Mnk14; CR 22; Medium-size aberration; HD 8d8+16 + 14d8+28; hp 143; Init +7; Spd 70 ft.; AC 31 (touch 28, flat-footed 29); Atk +23/+18 melee (1d12+7, unarmed strike); SA flurry of blows, *ki* strike (+2), stunning attack; SQ abundant step, diamond body, diamond soul, improved evasion, leap of the clouds, purity of body, slow fall (50 ft.), still mind, wholeness of body; AL LE; SV Fort +13, Ref +14, Will +27; Str 24, Dex 17, Con 14, Int 20, Wis 30, Cha 11.

Skills and Feats: Balance +30, Concentration +27, Diplomacy +2, Intimidate +11, Knowledge (arcana) +30, Listen +37, Move Silently +28, Sense Motive +21, Spot +37, Swim +17, Tumble +28; Alertness, Ambidexterity, Blind-Fight, Deflect Arrows, Dodge, Endurance, Expertise, Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Improved Unarmed Strike, Iron Will, Skill Focus (Swim), Stunning Fist.

Possessions: Belt of giant's strength +6, Daern's instant fortress, gem of seeing, periapt of wisdom +6, mantle of spell resistance (SR 21), *necklace of prayer beads (bead of summons), robe of blending.*

The chief scientist of Erelhei-Cinlu's Antisolar Institute, Iiscul first came to the Vault from his native city of Dhra-Muor-Shaiiu as a student of the institute 60 years ago. He left after a dozen years to participate in field study with several successful inquisitions, but finally returned to accept his current post at the institute just five years ago, replacing the previous chief scientist, who was slain in the drow civil war. Despite his stereotypical illithid reserve, Iiscul relishes his position and secretly enjoys the excitement that Erelhei-Cinlu has to offer. Often seen perusing the stock at different slave markets throughout the city, Iiscul has become something of a gourmand, always in search of delicious graymatter fresh from the cranium.

can be found here, divided into differing and rival philosophical schools, though all are devoted to evil. These folk spend much time in vicious debate and disagreement, creating conflicts in which truth is not the only casualty.

The greatest scholarly institution of the drow in Erelhei-Cinlu is the Spire of the Encyclic, which claims the membership of the vast majority of drow sages, whether as professors, professors emeritus, or simply as students. The district sports many other scholarly enclaves as well, and not only of drow. Some human scholars, as well as smaller groups of illithid and derro savants, also live and teach here, and even visitors from other planes are not unusual.

The Spire of the Encyclic

The Spire of the Encyclic looks down on the city from the western end of the quarter, south of the Aisle of Scribes off of Libram Square. Its broad central stair spirals up 13 stories, though only the lower three are open to the public. The Spire houses the *Libram Encyclic*, which is said to contain all the accumulated knowledge of the drow, and its guardian, an ancient male drow known as the Inscrutable Redactor. The Redactor appoints membership to the body of scholars called the Professors of the Encyclic, to whom he grants access to the great *Libram* as well as all the libraries of the Spire.

The Professors of the Encyclic are expected to be quite ruthless in the pursuit of knowledge, as well as in the uses to which they put their subordinates. These subordinates serve as the staff of the lower libraries and often sell their services as private tutors or sages, for they, like their masters, also have access to the upper libraries of the Spire. Even the lower libraries contain thousands of tomes and scrolls found nowhere else. Thus, the Spire of the Encyclic draws many visitors from the surface world who come in search of knowledge forbidden in their own lands.

The Antisolar Institute

Ages ago, illithid scientists founded the Antisolar Institute to broaden their scholarly contacts beyond their own race. Built of greenish-gray stone not native to the Vault, the Institute is a broad, four-story building located on both sides of central Tumkeoite Boulevard. The larger northern section of the Institute houses laboratories and lecture halls, as well as the living quarters of the two dozen illithid staff members and their leader, the chief scientist Iiscul. The smaller southern section is home to three derro savants and their followers, and holds an unknown number of secret laboratories. Covered walkways on the third and fourth floors join

the two sections, but overall there is limited interaction between the illithids and derro who work here.

Under normal circumstances, derro and illithids seldom cooperate, but in this case they share a common belief in a secret radiation that permeates the Vault. At one time, the existence of this radiation was more generally accepted, but evidence of its presence is no longer considered valid by most of the drow and human scholars of Erelhei-Cinlu. However, the illithids hold that its properties alter as the hypothetical radiation phases through different wavelengths. The three derro savants employed here, refugees from a past Uniting War, are acknowledged experts in the field of preternatural radiation, and the illithids wish to take advantage of their expertise. If possible, they hope to find a way to use the secret radiation to nullify the detrimental effects of sunlight upon the races of the Night Below.

Establishments

Favored pubs in the Ghetto of Scholars include the Doctrinaire and the Poison Pen, two turbulent pubs on Polemic Avenue, and the more sedate Third Level located on the corner of Missive Street and Ruse Alley. The Third Level is favored by devotees of the drowic version of Dragon Chess, who can be found here at all hours exercising their strategic abilities against each other.

THE GHETTO OF ARTISANS

The insular craftsmen of the drow make their homes and businesses in the Ghetto of Artisans. Alchemists, jewelers, sculptors (of stone or flesh), scribes, painters, poisoners, tailors, taxidermists, and more all serve the needs of an eclectic group of customers. As with their neighbors in the Ghetto of Scholars, the artisans form cabals and guilds with ever-changing alliances, disputing the quality and worth of each other's craftsmanship while tormenting their own apprentices with impossible tasks and cruel, demeaning criticism.

Much of the ghetto is inaccessible to visitors, being a maze of private walled communities, within which are houses and workshops, as well as taverns, bordellos and gambling dens open only to the local residents. Small shops and storefronts ring these closed neighborhoods, guarded with traps, curses, and trained monsters (trained wolf-spiders are commonly found roaming the premises of local shops), as well as hired mercenaries (though the latter are hardly considered trustworthy). They also sometimes employ xvart menials as "runners" to fetch raw materials or other necessities from elsewhere in the city or the Vault. Some of the artisans have made contracts with specific merchant clans, trading their finished goods for needed raw materials, while the rest sell their wares to both drow merchants and outsiders.

The Twilight Gallery

The stained granite facade of the Twilight Gallery rises three stories above Rebuke Avenue. Two tall, narrow doorways that face the street are always open, casting a dim, shifting illumination on any passerby. Within is a veritable maze of halls and chambers, filled with the paintings and etchings of the legendary drow artist, Ool Eurts. A staff of six dopplegangers act as curators of the gallery, describing the works found in their allotted sections to visitors and sometimes adopting the guises of those pictured in the paintings. The artist himself attends gallery exhibitions of his latest works, and may otherwise be encountered wandering the city looking for new subjects.

In the final chamber hangs the *Last Canvas*, normally covered by a heavy drapery, but clearly almost as tall as the three stories of the gallery. Each formal exhibition concludes here with a viewing of the magical canvas, into which admirers are drawn to enjoy its contents at close hand. Usually an image of some Abyssal vista, or occasionally a great event in drow history, the subject of the *Last Canvas* is always entirely vivid and often lethal to unlucky visitors. Nevertheless, it is considered the high point of any exhibit. The painting remains covered at all other times, when it is said to show nothing but the great void. Obviously, anyone drawn into that image would be forever lost, and many suspect that certain unwary critics have been disposed of thusly.

The House of Abandonment

The eastern ghetto holds the House of Abandonment, a large block of tenements occupying all of Mourningweb Court. Unwanted drow and half-drow children are given or sold to this orphanage, where they are tested to determine their fitness to live. Those with aptitudes receive some rudimentary training, and the chance to demonstrate their worth, up to the age of eight years. From there they are farmed out as apprentices, given to the military societies, or sold to the nobles; otherwise they are simply cast out.

Life in the orphanage prior to this point is hardly pleasant, but it does represent the drow social ideal. The strong torment and demean the weak; all presence of kindness and trust are exploited, then eliminated; and above all, the young learn to fear Lolth and her priestesses. Deaths are quite common here, sometimes resulting in the rare "child-banshees" so highly prized as mourners by the drow priesthoods.

Establishments

Tailors who make and alter delicate drow garments dwell along the length of Sash Avenue. The tattoo artists, barbers, and flesh-sculptors, who bear some little resemblance to surgeons, congregate along Flensers Passage, where they make their alterations to both slaves and beasts, as well as to the occasional willing victim. Survival rates are actually fairly high, but even when bad alterations result in the loss of favored pets or slaves, the skills of the drow taxidermists (most located along Shredfell Lane) stand ready and waiting. Alchemists and poisoners work closely together on Crucible Road, where visitors can purchase the best, and worst, potions and elixirs. Finally, jewelers and weaponsmiths congregate near the north wall on Daggerstaff Alley

THE GHETTO OF PERFORMERS

Drow players and performers live in the Ghetto of Performers. Musicians, jugglers, tumblers, dancers, actors, puppeteers, playwrites, poets, and singers—as well as the dreaded lurking mimes—all practice their arts in the theaters, halls, squares, streets, and even the alleys of their ghetto. All save the mimes seek the attention of the largest crowds they can gather. The more lurid and gaudy the performance, the better they and their audience enjoy it. In spite of constantly changing fads, there is always a certain sameness to drow performances;

Pruuma She-bear: Female bugbear Ftr11; CR 13; Medium-size humanoid (goblinoid); HD 3d8+9 + 11d10+33; hp 116; Init +7; Spd 20 ft.; AC 23 (touch 11, flat-footed 22); Atk +21/+16/+11 melee (1d8+9, *+3 morningstar*); SQ Darkvision 60 ft.; AL CE; SV Fort +11, Ref +9, Will +4; Str 19, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 17, Wis 11, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Climb +18, Handle Animal +14, Intimidate +5, Listen +2, Move Silently +10, Ride +20, Spot +2, Swim +18; Alertness, Cleave, Dodge, Expertise, Improved Critical (morningstar), Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Improved Unarmed Strike, Mobility, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (morningstar), Weapon Specialization (morningstar).

Possessions: +3 morningstar, banded mail +3, rope of entanglement.

The reigning arena champion is the bugbear bounty hunter Pruuma She-bear. The warrior's dramatic flair aids her reputation as a flamboyant combatant and executioner. Those who underestimate her skills at bounty hunting seldom profit, as Pruuma studies her quarry carefully, learning their habits and anticipating their moves. An excellent strategist and developer of traps, Pruuma favors using decoys, spies, and many sorts of bait carefully selected to lure her prey into her powerful clutches. A great favorite of the mistress of House Vae, Pruuma nonetheless continues to turn down offers of a position in that household, for she knows it is better to catch slaves than to be one.

however, since most drow performers are severe addicts to every vice, few of them live long enough to develop any real perspective. Most wish only for a glorious demise. To their audience, it is all the same, and they quickly find some other "star" to watch until it too falls.

The Silver Stage

The drow playwrite Drucena owns and operates this seven-story theater, the lower four levels of which house the city's largest stage. Named for its pale, shimmering procenium arch and renowned for its elaborate moving scenery and other mechanical gimmicks (including the classic *deus ex machina*), the theater also boasts the most debauched company of performers in Erelhei-Cinlu. No act is too vile or depraved for their tastes, and they constantly seek young talents to despoil.

Perhaps the most admired play in the company's repertoire is the *War of the Houses*, depicting an idealized Vault in which the noble houses bloodily destroy each other, allowing the survivors in the city to enjoy a perfect and uninhibited anarchy. The show then devolves into a typical drow orgy; performances usually sell out weeks in advance. The audience is expected to participate, and for grand performances ushers release airborne hallucinogens into the theater to add to the mayhem.

The Acrobats' Terrace

A large courtyard known as the Acrobats' Terrace stands near the southeast corner of the Noble Gate. The gate's parapets allow a good view of the courtyard, and guards often gather here to watch the performance of acrobats practicing on the field below. Three graceful towers rise four stories high in the middle of the courtyard, joined by slender ropes of woven silk that bridge the tops of the towers. Protruding arms of stone run down the tower walls, and between and around them on the ground stand small fountains, benches, and statuary.

During festivals, the resident acrobats climb and tumble between the towers, or perform feats of daring while combating each other with bladed pole-arms. Jugglers practice their arts in the courtyard below, heedless of the safety of onlookers. During less hectic periods, the lurking mimes sometimes congregate here, where they have been seen to cavort with marlgoyles from the outer Vault. Outsiders are not welcomed at these silent fêtes, and will be stalked by mimes for the duration of their stay in Erelhei-Cinlu should they breach the dignity of the mimes' gathering.

Establishments

All the underworld's a stage, at least in the view of drow entertainers, and that outlook certainly holds true in the brothels, taverns, and drug emporiums of this

ghetto. The Silk Curtain on Strut Lane is known for its acrobatic and dancing harlots. Further north, on Odium Avenue, the costumed and painted doxies of Mock Hall hurl their derision, and sometimes their ordure, on both customers and passersby alike. The Upturned Jar, at the intersection of Mingle Street and Tac Alley, serves the best of the musty-flavored fungal wines found in the Vault, to the accompaniment of drum and pipe. Finally, the Quandarium, on Netherlorn Road, serves more refined and addictive liquors, like the deadly abyssenthe, which is said to sharpen all the senses even as it destroys the body.

THE GHETTO OF SAVAGES

Large numbers of non-drow soldiers, whether of goblinoid stock or members of the scaled-races, make this ghetto home. Bugbears and troglodytes form the bulk of these fighters, whose status in the Vault hovers somewhere between mercenary and slave. The most prominent of these mercenaries is a bugbear bounty-hunter named Pruuma She-bear; when not chasing escaped slaves, she serves as mistress of ceremonies at the arena, and she carries her heavy, spiked Morningstar of Office wherever she goes.

The Ceremonial Arena

This arena on Chainmail Boulevard provides solid, brutal entertainment to drow and non-drow alike. Built of common clay brick, it stands six stories high at its outer edge, with a special seating section for drow nobles and their retainers. The only rule on the floor of the arena is kill or be killed. Combatants include paid gladiators, bugbears, or troglodytes alone or in groups (here to settle grudges), trained or wild beasts, monsters, or any combination of the above. In addition, escaped slaves are often brought here when re-captured, assuming no one else claims them, to be given to the troglogytes for combat practice. Such captives are killed (or at least wounded) and then eaten, their unwanted remains thrown to the ghouls of the Ghetto of the Dead.

The arena is home to two popular annual festivals. The first, the troglodyte Triumph of Strength, begins with horrifying violence and concludes with the even more horrifying troglodyte mating ritual, performed each year at molting time. Visitors are welcome, but protective magic is recommended for those not naturally able to withstand the stench. The other festival is the Executioners' Revel, in dishonor of the traitorous House Kilsek, held every year since their departure. It begins with the normal roster of killings and concludes with the dismemberment and execution of drow "traitors" (potentially any in disfavor with Lolth's priestesses) by ranking bugbear soldiers.

The Yugoloth Barrack

Most of the many nycaloths and mezzoloths (see *Manual of the Planes*) that dwell within Erelhei-Cinlu live in the Yugoloth Barrack. A long, three-story structure situated between the bend of Sentinel Street and West End Street, the barrack occupies all the area from Netherdelve Alley to Carveheart Road. Built by fiends from dark red stones, the barrack's outer walls bear a beaten bronze gate on the southern face. Night hags come and go at odd times via several small doors on the north wall.

The yugoloths who dwell here are the unchallenged masters of this ghetto, though they wander throughout the rest of the city as well. It might be possible to purchase the service of one of the fiendish mercenaries, though not for any action against the priesthood of Lolth. They likewise will take no action against any of their kin in the Vault, although other creatures, including outsiders such as demons, devils, or the gith-races are fair game.

Establishments

The rank neighborhood between the Concourse and northern High Street teems with taverns and brothels catering to the goblinoids and other savage humanoids that visit the city. The Old Battleaxe, a large gambling house and tavern on Hauberk Street, caters mostly to bugbear soldiers. Further east, on Rend Road, sits the Hair o' the Grog, a tavern and inn managed by a human former mercenary who happens to be infected with lycanthropy. The jolly proprietor often entertains his jaded guests by transforming into a werewolf.

THE GHETTO OF CHATTELS

The Ghetto of Chattels holds Erelhei-Cinlu's slave and livestock pens. The slaves' treatment (and resulting quality) varies widely by trader. Many of the best slaves and beasts are located in the southern sections of the ghetto, or anywhere along the High Street. Traders offer undead and even demonic slaves along with natural creatures, though such unusual chattel usually comes from hags visiting the city from their refuge in the Lower Planes.

Demons and undead also come here to buy slaves or other livestock, as do derro, illithids, and the occasional surface dweller. The markets primarily serve noble drow, of course, who also enjoy the specialty brothels found in this ghetto. The priesthood of Kiaransali is predominant here, though always under the watchful eye of Lolth's priestesses and their servants in the city patrols.

The Verdict Hall

Overlooking the city from the east side of the High Street, just south of the Concourse, the bleached limestone walls of Verdict Hall rise eight stories high. The top three stories are actually one large pillared auditorium. Any foreigner or non-noble drow arrested in Erelhei-Cinlu is brought here for trial and ultimate disposition. Of course, guilt is the only verdict ever delivered in this court, and there are but two possible penalties for the convicted: slavery or death. Therefore, in drow jurisprudence, the winning strategy is the one that avoids trial altogether.

Bribery is the key, but negotiations must be carefully handled. Offering too little moves a detainee closer to trial, but offering too much has the same effect; for it is obvious that anyone capable of paying much is also capable of paying much more—especially when they are visitors to the city. Chief Discriminator Kemehdra reviews all cases involving foreigners that come to trial, for she particularly enjoys adding mutilation to their sentences, a task she occasionally performs herself.

Menagerie Square

Menagerie Square is home to the largest slave-market in the city, and surrounding it on all sides are establishments catering to the needs of the slave-buyer. Smiths work chaining slaves or repairing cages, while branders work to mark slaves and

Jalvan: Male half-drow Rog12; CR 12; Medium-size humanoid; HD 12d6+12; hp 54; Init +6; Spd 30 ft.; AC 18 (touch 18, flat-footed 10); Atk +21/+16 melee (1d6+3/crit 18-20/x2, *+3 rapier*); SA Sneak attack +6d6; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., half-elf traits, improved evasion, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC, can't be flanked, +1 against traps); AL CN; SV Fort +5, Ref +16, Will +6; Str 11, Dex 27, Con 13, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 12.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +12, Balance +15, Bluff +11, Decipher Script +12, Diplomacy +13, Disable Device +18, Escape Artist +18, Forgery +12, Gather Information +11, Hide +24, Innuendo +12, Jump +11, Listen +3, Move Silently +18, Pick Pocket +20, Search +3, Spot +3, Tumble +20; Dodge, Mobility, Spring Attack, Weapon Finesse (rapier), Weapon Focus (rapier).

Possessions: +3 rapier, gloves of Dexterity +4.

An Erelhei-Cinlu native of unknown parentage, Jalvan was cast out from the guild of scribes early in his apprenticeship. He has since risen to a position of leadership among the rakes of the city due mostly to his heroic actions during the drow civil war. The nobles of House Kilsek persecuted the upstart rakes, sentencing them to mutilation and death by torture. Through his skills as a forger, Jalvan helped pass false orders and documents to mislead the authorities that attempted to rule the city, until their attention was turned elsewhere. The outcasts hid as the nobles fought, and before long Kilsek was itself brought low by the cruel goddess Lolth. Jalvan dreams of true revolution, but has made few advances since the end of the civil war. In the meantime, he makes a good contact for adventurers from the surface world who hope to find allies in the city.

beasts with hot iron and crushed crystal. While brands can be, (and often are) altered as ownership of a slave is transferred between masters, the root-brand is indelible. When properly marked by a drow slave-brander, the imprint cannot be removed by anything short of a *wish* or *miracle*.

The Venerable Fleshpeddler, master auctioneer of Menagerie Square, has dwelt and worked here for nearly six centuries. None of his many apprentices and juniors can compare to his talent for getting the best prices for slaves and livestock, though his large commissions are often too much for many slave-traders to afford. Many other "deals" can be made on chattels found in this large ghetto, but the buyer should (here, as everywhere in Erelhei-Cinlu) always beware.

Establishments

The Silver Collar, on Venom Boulevard, is an expensive and exclusive bordello, while the sanguinary pleasures found in the numerous torture parlors lining Throttle Street are priced more negotiably. Other popular brothels and taverns include the Cloven Hoof on Stable Street, the Dark Desire on Manacle Avenue, and the Soulcrusher Saloon on Slavers' Way.

THE GHETTO OF OUTCASTS (Beggar's Ghetto)

This section of the city is given over to the Outcasts, the ultimate undesirables of Erelhei-Cinlu. Among their number are the beggars, tainted by disease; the half-breeds, tainted by mixed blood (either human, elven, or outsider); and the lost foreigners, who bear the taint of their own inferior races. One quality unites all who dwell here: poverty.

The drow dislike poverty, as they dislike sickness, weakness, and ugliness, but they still occasionally have uses for those so afflicted. Therefore, the outcasts are permitted to remain here, on the edge of dark elven society. Thieves abound here, though they practice their art throughout the rest of the city, as do the ubiquitous beggars.

Thieves

The thieves of the city band together for mutual support and protection. Of course betrayals are common, but such is the way of thieves everywhere. Here, however, there are two groups at almost opposite ends of the spectrum. One branch is the lowest of the low, the dregs of even this most depraved of cultures. Most of these rogues lack the wit and skill of the powerful drow masters of Erelhei-Cinlu, but they are well practiced in the low arts of mugging, ambush, and brutal murder.

Members of the other branch hate dark elven society and would see it changed. Among them are many who have the blood of surface elves or humans. These principled outcasts call themselves rakes, to distinguish themselves from mere rogues, and they are particularly despised by the nobles. The leading voice among the rakes is the half-drow

Jalvan, who makes his headquarters in the Tavern of Nines off of Cresset Alley.

Beggars

The beggars who wander the streets of Erelhei-Cinlu make their homes, such as they are, in the so-called Beggar's Ghetto. Many—perhaps most—are simply poverty-stricken, brought to their destitute state by the usual array of addictions, curses, or incurable madness. These beggars wander the back streets and alleys, scavenging what they can and seeking handouts from those they encounter. Sometimes the drow, even the nobles, respond favorably to these supplications, for the dark elves are moved by the suffering of others and wish to prolong it when possible.

Erelhei-Cinlu also possesses different sorts of palmers, who ply the begging bowl with even greater fervor; and these are feared in their own right, for they carry a dread disease. Called the Poxbearers, these beggars plead with glazed white eyes, picking at skin covered in milky lesions connected by chalky, deep-veined tendrils of rotting flesh. The stricken rogues serve Govoc the Prophet, an influential orator most often seen begging on the Concourse in a place of honor before the sewer gates.

The mere threat of their touch is enough to provoke the toss of a few coins, but the Poxbearers also are rumored to have second-sight. To an obliging donor, they usually predict good fortune, while to the ungenerous they foretell doom. They might even grasp such an offender in order to spread the contagion they bear, which even the strongest magics cannot cure.

Establishments

Numerous cheap brothels and taverns operate in the Ghetto of Outcasts. Several rakish retreats cluster near the eastern wall. The best is the aforementioned Nines, but only those known in the area are permitted to enter the tavern. Not far away, on Crew Lane, stands the Greedy Beggar Inn, a place entirely unwelcoming to beggars, but where visitors may find food and lodging. Nearby on Fathom Avenue is the Snake & Weasel, a notorious dive, though the owner is well respected for his ability to fence stolen goods, even to markets outside the Vault. Finally, the Itchy Witch, a brothel and inn on Furuncle Road, is considered remarkable for the advanced skill, and advanced age, of its prostitutes.

Closer to the Ghetto of Chattels are the lairs of the lowly roguish thieves of Erelhei-Cinlu. Few visitors would have any desire to call on these establishments, but two are worthy of mention. The Bent Bar, on Shirk Street, is famous for its cockatrice fights. Run by a pair of half-ogre brothers with connections to the temple of Erythnul in the Foreigner's Ghetto, the place is a good spot for diners looking for a fistfight with their food and drink. The Grimacing Wizard, on Blackrail Alley, is rumored to be the best place in the city (other than the Snake & Weasel) to find the location of goods stolen in the city, particularly magic items.

THE GHETTO OF THE DEAD (The Tombs)

The Ghetto of the Dead, more commonly called the Tombs, is the lair of the undead in Erelhei-Cinlu, ceded to them in honor of their service to the Queen of Spiders. The city's vampiric denizens are most often found here, rather than in one of the more upscale areas; for even in Erelhei-Cinlu, a city devoted to addiction and depravity, the vampire and vampire spawn's addiction to blood is considered *declasse*, little better than the ghouls' craving for flesh. Necromancers dwell here too, where they can practice their craft without restriction. They produce an almost endless supply of zombies and skeletons for their own use, as well as animating some of the creations of the taxidermists of the artisan's quarter. The ghouls who lair here are reasonably tame, following the leadership of their ghastly masters, for they have learned that they need only wait—eventually, all the inhabitants of the city become their meat.

Necropolis Square

Whether an elaborate funeral procession of some wealthy non-noble, the modest death service of a commoner, or even the callous final disposition of a pauper, all end in Necropolis Square. The Square is well tended and maintained, licked clean as it were by the ghouls and ghasts of the city. Eight tall obelisks, one for each of the noble houses, sit at its eight corners. At its center stands the Well of Despair, considered the birthplace of the Vault's shadows, and certainly a stronghold of those vaporous undead. By tradition, the undead do not enter the Square to feed until a drow priest or priestess has ritually shut the eastern gate. The exception to this is the annual festival called the Running of the Ghouls.

Once a year, the ghouls and ghasts of the city revert to their feral natures, running through the Tombs and spilling out into the rest of the city, where they may feed freely on any who cannot defend themselves. Many noble youth join in the debauch, though covering themselves first in a protective fungal ointment to avoid being scented as prey. A few of these young drow may even participate in the feeding, but most often they simply use their skills to open the locked gates and doors of the poor, or strangers, for the young nobles enjoy the spectacle of forcing others to defend themselves against the ravenous undead. Citizens of greater means buy wards against the undead from Lolth's priestesses, as the priestesses call the ghouls back into the Ghetto of the Dead to end the festival.

The Alabaster Slab

Erelhei-Cinlu is a city famed for its bordellos, and even the Tombs are no exception. While there are several here, the one most often spoken of is the Alabaster Slab, simply called the Slab. Only two stories high, but many more below, it is located at the intersection of Banshee Corridor and Handpallor Avenue. A true den of iniquity, the slab is a brothel of the dead. From pale and beautiful vampiric paramours to other, more repugnant offerings, the Slab serves a clientele whose passion runs cold. Particularly favored by necromancers, this establishment is operated by a seldom seen, possibly demonic madame named Suraala Mora. A devout worshiper of Lolth, Suraala makes it her mission to provide dark oblivion to her clients and customers, while seeing that her favored employees are always well fed.

Sarcoma Keep

This fortified mausoleum at the north end of Annihilation Street is the stronghold of the vampire-warlord Telagos. Once a proud human warrior of Flan heritage, he has dwelt in the Vault since he fled the surface nearly five centuries ago and

has made Sarcoma Keep his lair for more than three. The building stands four stories high, with a central tower rising four more above that. Surprisingly, many of the vampire's servitors are outcast drow or half-drow whom he instructs in the arts of warfare in exchange for their procurement of necessities for him. He also houses a group of trained trolls to guard his keep from attack, and these creatures proved most useful during the recent civil war.

Establishments

A few watering holes that cater to troglodytes hunker along the "Tomb-side" of Sentinel Street, the proprietors of which often trade flesh for coin, even to ghouls and ghasts. Closer to Necropolis Square are a small number of vampire-run taverns where humans or other living clients might occasionally be found. The best of these is doubtless the Black Chalice on Pandemonium Way, a haven for those gamblers who would "risk all" during their visit to Erelhei-Cinlu.

ERELHEI-CINLU IN THE CAMPAIGN

The drow metropolis offers many opportunities for adventure. Good or neutral parties can be drawn here in order to retrieve a lost adventurer, purchase the freedom of a slave, or capture a fugitive from surface justice. Even good-aligned characters on missions such as these might be allowed access to the city, on the understanding that they will not interfere with the ongoing commerce of the drow.

For evil characters, training in many dark arts can be obtained in Erelhei-Cinlu. For both neutral and evil alignments, there are unusual magic items, spells, or other forbidden lore that may be found here, as well. Neutral or evil parties can even enjoy visiting the city on a recurring basis; unlike other bastions of evil in the World of Greyhawk, the great city of the drow is "open for business" to all who wish to risk its perils.

RECENT HISTORY OF THE VAULT

Before the Greyhawk Wars fractured the nations of the Flanaess, the noble house of Eilservs devised a bold scheme to establish themselves as leaders of a true drow monarchy. Though the priestesses of Lolth opposed them, the rebellious Eilservs found power in the worship of an alien god, and through alliances with evil giants from the Hellfurnace and Crystalmist mountains, Eilservs created a clandestine stronghold outside the Vault. But this gambit proved their undoing.

Marauders from the upper world followed the trail of influence back to the Vault, where they assaulted not only the Eilservs estate, but also the Fane of Lolth itself. The destruction that the surface dwellers wrought was not vast, but its effects were ruinous to house Eilservs. Its nobles were made hostages, to be ravaged by their captors; with its wealth and pride despoiled, the noble house of Eilservs fell in disgrace for its weakness.

The Fane of Lolth survived intact, but not unshaken. The wrath of the priestesses was visited upon the surviving Eilservs, and the wrath of Lolth was poured out upon the surface world. The Queen of the Spiders did not scruple to build upon the foundation laid by the fallen house of Eilservs, and in the midst of the Greyhawk Wars the giantish cohorts they had assembled were finally loosed upon the nations bordering the central Crystalmists—but this time at Lolth's command.

Though her power grew on the surface, the remaining noble houses tested Lolth's strength in the Vault. House Tormtor, former ally of Eilservs, now pressed their claim to be first among the nobility, in honor of their strength and decisive action against the enemies of the drow. Set against them was house Kilsek, once the greatest enemy of Eilservs, who also demanded preeminance among the houses, asserting their long devotion to Lolth as justification. In response, Tormtor espoused the newly militant faith of Kiaransalee and took up the banner of rebellion.

With Tormtor were joined the houses of Everhate and Aleval, who saw the prospect of advancement for themselves in a Tormtor victory. Kilsek aligned with the houses of Despana, Noquar, and Godeep, who held that sanction from the Fane of Lolth would determine the victor. Further complicating matters was the intrusion of astral mercenaries called the githyanki, ancient enemies of the illithid race. As the githyanki served on the side of the rebel faction, so the illithid felt compelled to join the conflict on the side of those who claimed loyalty to the Spider Queen.

Civil war erupted in the drow homeland—a brief, yet bloody conflict that spilled from the noble estates of the Upper Vault to the camps and villas of the Lower Vault, and finally into the streets of Erelhei-Cinlu. Before the end, hundreds of drow and hundreds more of their savage mercenaries were killed. The nobles might have destroyed themselves entirely had not the Queen of the Spiders intervened, though the cost was great to both Lolth and the noble houses. For her, the price was the loss of her holdings on the surface of Oerth, but the price she exacted from her most devoted house was even greater—Kilsek was sent into exile.

This was no simple expulsion, but a divine punishment for the failure of Kilsek to triumph over their rivals without putting the entire drow nation in jeopardy. All those of Kilsek blood were branded like slaves with the device of their house, and over this with the sign of the spider, marking them as anathema in the Vault. The servants of Lolth could detect the presence of those so marked, lest they ever attempt to return surreptitiously to the Vault. And so the Kilsek were cast out, and with them their servants and soldiers. Perhaps Lolth has other designs for her outcast children, but these will only be revealed far from the homeland of their birth.

In the wake of this departure came the revelation that Lolth had accepted the repentance of her most wayward disciple: Eclavdra, mistress of house Eilservs. The Eilservs were restored to their former holdings, if not their former position of leadership; and Eclavdra herself, that most resourceful of adventurers, became Lolth's ambassador to the realm of Iuz. Lest the dynamic rivalry of the houses again become unbalanced, an eighth noble family was introduced: the Vae.

A family of landless nobles from a lost city beneath the Pomarj, the Vae had long worked as slave-traders traveling with their attendant merchant clans, from whom they were indistinguishable, save for their house emblems. House Vae was granted the properties of the exiled Kilsek and charged with the task of restoring the drow to prosperity. Though they and their merchant followers were worshipers of the goddess Kiaransali (as they named her), the traditions of their cult allowed them to give deference to the Queen of

the Spiders, and so the Vae were found acceptable to Lolth and her priestesses.

Lolth took living sacrifices from the six warring houses before departing the Vault, so that none should go unpunished. Her high priestess put the chief consort of house Tormtor through the Test of Sacrifice, one of her many punishments, transforming him into a hideous drider, and conferred the surviving githyanki mercenaries to her illithid allies, to deal with as they saw fit. The drow nobles were then free to set about repairing their estates and nurturing new rivalries under the watchful eye of the Fane.

NOBLE FAMILIES OF THE VAULT

Eight noble houses control the affairs of the Vault. Over the years, houses have come and gone (usually due to internecine fighting), the most recent change being the expulsion of House Kilsek (and its subsequent replacement by House Vae) roughly seven years ago.

Tormtor

House Device: Electrum javelin
Urban Mandate: Ghetto of Foreigners
Rank: 1st
Alliances: Aleval, Vae

Verdaeth (CE female drow Clr13/Ftr6), mistress of House Tormtor, has been without a chief consort for nearly seven years, since her previous mate was taken to the Fane to endure the Test of Sacrifice. Failing that test resulted in his transformation into a spiderleg horror (See "The Punishments of Lolth"), and saw him driven out of the Vault. Lolth and her priesthood exacted this price from Verdaeth in exchange for permitting her house to retain its position of superiority over the other drow nobles. Mistress Verdaeth is philosophical about the sacrifice of her consort, but would enjoy seeing Charinida, the high priestess of Lolth, suffer his same fate.

Aleval

House Device: Gold wand
Urban Mandate: Ghetto of Performers
Rank: 2nd
Alliances: Tormtor, Vae

Under the rule of mistress Mevremas (CE female drow Clr14), Aleval has grown from the weakest of the drow houses to its current position near the top of the social structure. Mevremas's choice to ally with house Tormtor has proven very advantageous, as have the close relationships she has maintained with adventuring bands in the Underdark. Of all the nobles, Mevremas has the most extensive spy network in Erelhei-Cinlu. Her agents report to her on the activities of visitors whom she might find useful. Indeed, her willingness to bring foreigners into her service as more or less "free agents" is unusual among drow nobles, but she rationalizes that there will be plenty of time to enslave the world once she has gained supremacy over her own kindred.

Despana

House Device: Adamantine mace
Urban Mandate: Ghetto of Savages
Rank: 3rd
Alliances: Noquar, Godeep

The aggressive Mistress Nedylene (CE female drow Clr8) took command of house Despana during the midst of the civil war seven years ago. Nedylene's evil is unusually brutal, almost crude by drow standards, but very effective on the field of battle. House Despana is now organized in a more or less military fashion, maintained with a very un-drowlike discipline. Many in her own household would like to see their mistress assassinated, but her yugoloth guards have so far prevented the success of every such attack to date.

Noquar

House Device: Bronze nightmare head
Urban Mandate: Ghetto of Scholars
Rank: 4th
Alliances: Despana, Godeep

House Noquar is ruled by mistress Fedarra (CE female drow Clr17), a traditional drow matron steeped in the virtues of Lolth. However, her house owes its current position to her close contacts with several conservative illithid factions outside the Vault. With their counsel and support, Noquar withdrew early from the house-strife of seven years ago, and so was in a stronger position than most of the other noble families when Lolth intervened to end the conflict. With the passing of time, however, the other houses have been able to rebuild their strength while Noquar has continued to play a defensive strategy, making it vulnerable to future gambits from its rivals.

Godeep

House Device: Platinum Crossbow
Urban Mandate: Ghetto of Artisans
Rank: 5th
Alliances: Noquar, Despana

The mistress of house Godeep, Siadef (CE female drow Clr8/Ftr8), has ruled for longer than any of the other noble leaders currently in power. She succeeded in having the mistress of house Everhate assassinated two years before the civil war began, and with the exile of house Kilsek at the end of the conflict, Siadef was left as the most experienced noble ruler in the Vault. She was unwilling to commit to any significant military action (save for a series of strikes against Everhate) during the civil war, and this defensive stance allowed Godeep to come through nearly unscathed. In the long run, however, caution is seldom the path to power among the drow.

Vae

House Device: Iron chain
Urban Mandate: Ghetto of Slaves
Rank: 6th
Alliances: Tormtor, Aleval

House Vae had no direct involvement in the civil war, but mistress Sereska (CE female drow Clr7/Wiz8) responded quickly to rumors of the house-strife in the Vault, hoping to ally with the winning side. The unexpected seriousness of the conflict proved especially rewarding to this wandering house, which not only joined with the winning alliance, but also supplanted the leading house of the defeated faction. The Vae are still not well accepted by the other noble families of the Vault, but they have made themselves useful in the restoration of drow commerce, based on active and efficient slave trade.

Eilservs
House Device: Bronze staff
Urban Mandate: Ghetto of the Dead
Rank: 7th
Alliances: None
The legendary mistress Eclavdra (CE female drow Clr23) returned to the direct rulership of house Eilservs just three months ago, after several years in the Flanaess. She has been invaluable in her service to Lolth since the end of the Greyhawk Wars, but the time has come to begin her final gambit in the Vault. She intends to make a bid for the leadership of the Great Fane of Lolth. The Queen of the Spiders does not oppose this so long as Eclavdra is precise in her strike against the current high priestess. The drow nation must not be further harmed, but when the time comes, Eclavdra must not be hesitant. In the coming duel, there will be no second chances.

Everhate
House Device: Silver daggers
Urban Mandate: Ghetto of the Outcasts
Rank: 8th
Alliances: None
The strategy of mistress Gahnah (CE female drow Clr12) during the civil war was to commit all the resources of Everhate to house Tormtor, while still proclaiming loyalty to the Fane of Lolth. The result was that Everhate gained nothing politically, while at the same time losing nearly everything in its estate. Since the end of the conflict, the house has continued to lose status. Everhate now has very little left to offer any potential allies, and its lowly position is quite properly blamed on the poor leadership of mistress Gahnah.

THE SERVANTS OF LOLTH
The Great Fane is the principal temple of Lolth on Oerth. It houses the servants of Lolth, a small but powerful community of priestesses, together with their servants and guards. All of them are required to abandon the loyalties they may once have held to noble families or factions, in favor of pure devotion to Lolth and obedience to her high priestess. Matron Charinida (CE female drow Clr21) currently holds power here, as she has for the past two centuries. Her rule has been at risk several times in the past, but never more so than during the drow civil war.

Charinida chose sides in that struggle, which only helped to prolong the fighting and diminish her own authority. The civil war was finally ended by the intervention of Lolth, but at the price of her holdings on the surface. However, what few understood at the time was that Charinida had not summoned the deity. It was Eclavdra of the ravaged house of Eilservs who abased herself before the Queen of the Spiders, undergoing another of the punishments of Lolth to further prove herself. Eclavdra survived unmarred and communed directly with Lolth, making a pact with her in the Web, the details of which Charinida still does not know.

Now, seven years later, Eclavdra has returned to the Vault. Both she and the high priestess have grown in power since their last encounter, and it seems that the time is swiftly approaching when they must determine which of them is most fit to rule. In the coming duel Lolth cannot be expected to intervene, but the rewards for victory will be great, and the penalties for defeat will be absolute. If Eclvadra should prevail, the surface nations of the Flanaess can also expect to suffer her retribution, and feel the venom of the Queen of the Spiders once again.

Drow Deities
The three gods detailed below will help Dungeon Masters interested in fleshing out the inhabitants of the Vault. Zinzerena and Keptolo are completely new. Kiaransali has appeared in several sources, but the version presented here describes her persona and motivations in the World of Greyhawk. The Forgotten Realms version of a larger drow pantheon can be found in Forgotten Realms: *Faiths & Pantheons*. A description of Lolth, the Demon Queen of the Drow, can be found in *Deities & Demigods*.

Keptolo
The Eager Consort
Drow Demigod
Symbol: Stylized mushroom
Home Plane: Demonweb Pits (Abyss)
Alignment: Chaotic evil
Portfolio: Flattery, intoxication, rumor, opportunism
Worshipers: Drow males
Cleric Alignments: CE, CN, NE
Domains: Chaos, Evil, Knowledge, Travel
Favored Weapon: Longsword

Keptolo (kep-*toe*-low) is the drow male ideal: elegant, quick-witted, attentive, and eagerly debauched. He normally appears as a young nobleman dressed in well-tailored silks of red, purple, jet, and amber. He is armed with a thin but sturdy poinard and a filigreed longsword. He affects a two-handed fighting style, using both weapons at once. Otherwise he appears dressed for the hunt, velvet-cloaked and armed with a magnificent crossbow. His relationship with other drow deities is one of insincere amity, save for Zinzerena, whom he openly despises. His symbol is a stylized mushroom, which in drow culture is associated with both strong drink and fertility.

Feed the vanity of your mistress, and all her treasures shall be yours. Be careful whom you offend, and keep an expendable companion nearby to hold culpable for your crimes. Gossip can be as deadly as the venom on an assassin's blade. Use the poison of words to destroy your rivals, that you may claim for yourself all they once presumed was theirs.

Shrines to Keptolo are found throughout the underworld, for many male drow worship him as their patron, mostly due to his association with drinking. Tales of his sexual exploits are quite popular, and there are groups of performers who act them out for festivals and private gatherings. His greatest temple is in the drow city of Erelhei-Cinlu, but only his most attractive or wealthy worshipers are permitted to participate in services there.

Clerics of Keptolo are found as advisors, critics, philosophers, and politicians: essentially, any role that does not require actual work. They seek to emulate their deity in all ways, and as such number among the most handsome and charming of the drow race. However, followers of

Keptolo remain very dangerous, for many of them are skilled dirksmen, poisoners, or spies. Utterly capricious and completely untrustworthy (even by drow standards), worshipers of the Eager Consort are deferential to priestesses of Lolth and attentive to the matrons of the powerful noble houses. In other relationships, they are manipulative and abusive, particularly with fellow clerics lower in the hierarchy.

Kiaransali

The Pitiless Dowager
Drow Demigoddess
Symbol: Female drow hand wearing silver rings
Home Plane: Demonweb Pits (Abyss)
Alignment: Chaotic evil
Portfolio: Slavery, Vengeance, Undeath
Worshipers: Drow, necromancers, undead
Cleric Alignments: CE, CN, NE
Domains: Chaos, Death, Evil
Favored Weapon: Dagger

Kiaransali (*kee*-uh-*ran*-sa-lee) is the divine sponsor of the drow slave trade in all its varied aspects. She appears as a sinuous drow female wearing only silver jewelry and black silk veils. Her only obvious weapon is her curved dagger, but her long, sharp fingernails are just as dangerous, and her touch is said to be as cold as that of a lich. This goddess has flirted with madness, even thinking to defy her queen. But Lolth's power is inexorable, and Kiaransali has taken of the queen's venom, returning once more to sanity and servitude. The symbol of Kiaransali is a hand of a female drow with three silver rings on each finger and one on the thumb, with the entire image surrounded by the silver strands of a spiderweb.

Forgive neither a slight, nor a debt; remember that payment must always be collected, whether in treasure or in vengeance. Life is the greatest crime, and perpetual slavery the fittest punishment. Let there be no freedom for the enslaved, even in death. Death comes for all; when it comes for you, take your slaves and your treasure with you to the grave. The riches of the grave are the dowry of the mistress.

Worship of Kiaransali has changed since the drow civil war. Prior to that, she was known as Kiaransalee, but the final glyph of her name was altered in all texts and inscriptions, and her liturgy was abridged to conform to more acceptable doctrines. Her religion no longer claims any authority that does not derive from the Queen of the Spiders, though some long-time worshipers still maintain the traditional resentments.

Clerics of Kiaransali often work as slavers, and occasionally as torturers or executioners. They are meticulous, almost paranoid, about record keeping, as well as being miserly with wealth. They commonly work their slaves to death and then animate the corpses so they may continue to serve. They keep their other servants in a state as close to slavery as they can manage, and withhold wages for the slightest offense. However, despite their stinginess, they are the first to offer bounty on escaped slaves and prisoners, and they will pay these rewards in full.

Zinzerena

The Princess of the Outcasts
Drow Hero Goddess
Symbol: The draped sword
Home Plane: Material Plane
Alignment: Chaotic neutral
Portfolio: Deception, humiliation, ambush, assassination
Worshipers: Drow outcasts, rakes, assassins, malcontents
Cleric Alignments: CE, CN, CG, N
Domains: Chaos, Luck, Trickery
Favored Weapon: Shortsword

Zinzerena (zin-zuh-RAY-nuh) is a rebellious heroine venerated by the dissidents and outcasts of drow society. She appears as a cloaked and masked drow rogue who moves with astounding agility. Her cloak has the powers of *displacement* and *protection*, while her shortsword produces a paralyzing venom. She also carries a black-handled crop, which she uses to stun her victims. The great artifact also has the powers of a *wand of wonder*. Her sponsor to divinity was Keptolo, though she gained a fraction of his power by a ruse, for which he hates her. Her symbol is the draped sword, representing her hidden menace.

Raise yourself up by bringing others down. Don't reveal your strength, or your hatred, until your victim is helpless. Don't strike until you have the advantage; the only fair fight is the one you win. Once the trap is sprung, make time to gloat before the kill. The legs of the spider are made to be broken.

The liturgy of Zinzerena is passed on in the form of folk-tales, for her faith has no place among the leadership of drow society. Her tales usually describe her hiding and waiting until her foes are weakened or lax in their attention before she attacks, and stories of her origin always describe her as local to the region in which they are told.

Clerics of Zinzerena often multi-class as fighters or rogues. They are much more common in the decadent cities of the drow, but may be encountered almost anywhere, for even the noble estates have servants and staff drawn from among the commoners. Only the most bohemian of nobles would enter her priesthood, though some have done so; inevitably, when they are discovered they are cast out as traitors to their social class. Ironically, such downcast nobles often become the greatest leaders of Zinzerena's clergy, for they are the best educated and most politically experienced. Her clerics work as anything from simple rogues, to laborers, guides, physicians, poets, prostitutes, or nearly any other profession. What they all share is a rebellious spirit and a desire for change.

Living Greyhawk **Campaign Note:** Knowledge of Zinzerena's cult has not yet spread to the surface world. At the present time, no player character in the Living Greyhawk campaign can take Zinzerena as a patron.

Exiles from the Vault

by Chris Pramas • illistrated by Sam Wood

Underneath Eastern Oerik lies the legendary Vault of the Drow (see the *Living Greyhawk Journal* in this issue). Until recently, the drow lived under the domination of the priestesses of Lolth, with eight noble houses implementing the will of the Queen of the Demonweb Pits. Trouble began after a group of adventurers raided the Vault. Accusations flew from all the noble houses. After a series of plots and counterplots, the House of Tormtor raised the flag of revolt against the priestesses of Lolth. A vicious civil war ensued, pitting Tormtor, two allied houses, and githyanki warriors against the House of Kilsek, the remaining three houses, and their illithid allies. During the fighting, the ancient Kilsek estate was sacked and its forces scattered. They regrouped, seized the drow city of Erelhei-Cinlu, and led a bloody pogrom against Tormtor sympathizers.

The civil war made the drow weak, and their enemies began to take advantage of the situation. After rounds of even bloodier fighting, the surviving nobles called a truce and met to discuss a lasting peace. The meetings were contentious, and more than one envoy fell to an assassin's blade. In the end, a peace plan was hammered together. The drow nobles decided the only way to keep the peace was to officially disband the House of Kilsek so that there would be balance among the houses. This was acceptable to everyone except, of course, the Kilseks.

The Plea

Venrit, the leader of the House of Kilsek, appealed to the priestesses of Lolth, but the minions of the Spider Queen stood by the decision. The Kilsek

estate was already destroyed, the priestesses noted, and the peace plan suited Lolth's whims. Venrit was furious. She refused to break up her forces among the other houses, nor was she willing to start a war she was certain to lose.

Venrit retreated to her private sanctum to gather her thoughts. "Was this really the will of the Spider Queen?" she asked herself. An idea was forming in her mind, but she would not lead her house to its ultimate annihilation unless she was certain of Lolth's desires. Venrit was determined to find out the truth.

While the rest of her house slept, Venrit slipped into the secret dungeons beneath the ruins of the Kilsek Estate. She dragged a prisoner, a Tormtor noble thought long dead by the rest of the drow, into the Kilsek arena. Venrit had watched hundreds of slaves and prisoners fight to the death here. This night she would undergo her own test.

Venrit summoned forth Teela, a monstrous spider of unmatched size and ferocity. As the hairy brute lumbered into the arena, Venrit shouted out, "Lolth, my queen, it is your servant, Venrit. Grant me this judgment!

"If the destruction of the House of Kilsek is truly your will, let Teela strike me down. But if Kilsek may continue to serve you, let Teela tear this Tormtor traitor limb from limb!"

The spider swung its head from Venrit to the prisoner and back again. The mistress of the House of Kilsek stood calmly before the beast, both hands touching the spider amulet that hung around her neck. As the prisoner's eyes bulged, Teela struck. Venrit watched the spider sink its fangs into the Tormtor noble. He screamed only once before the venom paralyzed him. Venrit should have exited the arena immediately, but she lingered to watch Teela feed. She knew she was in no danger. Lolth had spoken.

The Exodus

The next day, Venrit rallied the remaining members of her house and marched proudly out of the Vault of the Drow. She took two merchant clans, a troglodyte tribe, a dozen trolls, and a hunting pack of displacer beasts with her. She didn't know where she would go, but she vowed that the House of Kilsek would return to the Vault of the Drow as conquerors or not at all.

The first year outside the Vault was difficult. The Kilsek suffered attacks from deep gnomes, beholders, and githyanki. They grew low on ammunition and magical components, and food became scarce. The once proud house began to look like a group of scavengers, as Kilsek warriors looted what they needed from defeated foes. And still they wandered, deep beneath Oerth, with no destination. Some advocated that they try their luck on the surface world, others that they travel the planes. Meanwhile, more Kilseks died each day, felled by Underdark terrors, enemy blades, and starvation. Venrit was certain that Lolth had plans for the House of Kilsek, but no divination made those plans clear.

Venrit was on the verge of despair when an old ally found the Kilseks camped by an underground sea. Its name was Ohlcaig, and it was an illithid priest of Ilsensine. It had been an ally of the House of Kilsek during the civil war, and it still thought the proud

The City of Kalan-G'eld

Violence scarred Kalan-G'eld. The illithid attack that enslaved the gith population of the city leveled buildings and blasted holes in the streets. Subsequent fires burned whole neighborhoods, and the charring is evident despite the years that have passed. Other creatures laired there over the centuries, the latest of which had to be driven out by Kilsek fighters before the ruins could be settled.

Kalan G'eld sits in an enormous underground cavern. The ruined gith city was far too large for the drow to occupy fully, so they have revitalized only a part of it. The obvious choice was the low hill that dominated the cavern, and it is this area the drow have settled and fortified. They rebuilt a gith citadel, and this provides the final bulwark of drow defense. Beneath the citadel is Venrit's private realm, a surreal dungeonscape filled with webs and monsters to eliminate the uninvited and the unwary. Some speculate that Venrit's realm is not in the Underdark at all, but on the Abyss.

There are two main entrances to Kalan G'eld. The first is a large tunnel that connects to an ancient gith cavern network. The drow have built a barbican there, known as the Adamantine Gate, which is heavily defended with troops and traps. There are several barracks nearby, where the front-line warbands are based. From here they sortie out to fight the Godwar. The Kilsek military also maintains a series of outposts and smaller fortifications in the tunnel network around the city. They provide early warning of attack and can slow down incursions with ambushes and traps.

An underground river runs by the citadel hill and then plunges down into the rocks. Boats can navigate out to the serpentine branches beyond. The merchant clans use the river to conduct trade with the kuo-toans and other denizens of the Underdark. The drow have installed a massive portcullis that can be dropped into the river in times of danger. Two towers, one on either side of the river, provide additional defense. Allied kuo-toans are also used to patrol the nearby waters.

The troglodyte tribes were settled in a nearby cave complex. Despite the strategic advantages of having the troglodytes in the city proper, the drow kept them out. The stink of the creatures was simply too vile to consider letting them live in Kalan G'eld. The trolls are housed in this same cave complex.

drow could be useful to the mind flayers and their machinations. Ohlcaig told Venrit about an abandoned underground city on the other side of Oerth. It had been a city of the gith, the progenitors of the githyanki and githzerai, but it had been abandoned since the fall of the Illithid empire. It was far from the Vault and completely unknown to the surface world. Venrit thought it was perfect.

Ohlcaig arranged for the planar transport of the House of Kilsek. They traveled through several planes until they reached a portal that led to the lands underneath the Sundered Empire. Once back on Oerth, it was but a short journey to the ancient city of which Ohlcaig had spoken. It was largely in ruins, but the drow could see the potential. Venrit and her people spent several years fortifying the old gith city, scouting the region, and recruiting local troops. They learned the gith empire had been known as Zarum and the city as Anithor. The drow christened the city Kalan-G'eld, a name meaning "the forgotten spider."

BLOODSISTER Class Requirements

To qualify to become a bloodsister, a character must fulfill all the following criteria:

Race: Drow.
Sex: Female.
Alignment: Any evil.
Base Attack Bonus: +6 or better.
Feats: Ambidexterity, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (hand crossbow), Two-Weapon Fighting.

BLOODSISTER Class Skills

The bloodsister's class skills (and the key abilities for each) are:

Str: Climb, Jump.
Dex: Balance, Use Rope.
Con: –
Int: –
Wis: Innuendo, Listen, Spot.
Cha: Intimidate.

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

New Challenges

Within a matter of months, drow scouts located a large kuo-toan community. Venrit sent envoys, including merchant clan members fluent in the kuo-toan tongue. The kuo-toas had never seen a drow before and reacted fearfully, especially when the ebon-skinned strangers spoke to them in their own language. Only one envoy returned, and he was riddled with harpoon wounds.

The Kilsek reaction was swift. Several outlying kuo-toan communities were annihilated, and drow assassins killed a half dozen important whips. The speed and brutality of the drow attack cowed the kuo-toas, and soon enough, Venrit had kuo-toan troops serving in her warbands. The kuo-toan communities also gave the drow merchant clans places to trade.

At that time, the House of Kilsek had no plans for the surface world. Venrit's goal was to build up her strength until she could march back and take the Vault of the Drow. No use, she thought, in getting entangled in the affairs of the sunlit world. After all, that sort of madness had led to the civil war that resulted in Kilsek's exile in the first place.

As it turned out, the choice was not to be Venrit's. When the God of War, Stratis, was slain by a group of mortal heroes, droplets of his blood burned through the earth and exposed the heretofore unknown tunnels and galleries of Zarum. This opened the way to warbands from the Sundered Empire, who quickly descended into the depths to search for the weapons and armor of the slain god. This conflict became known as the Godwar, and it has brought savage warfare to the Sundered Empire region for the last five years. Six factions struggle for supremacy with godhood itself as the prize.

At first Venrit was content to remain in the shadows, watching the factions tear each other apart. Drow forces were not idle, but when they struck, they always made it look like someone else's work. Venrit's hope was that the war would end quickly, but like many others she was disappointed. It eventually became clear to her that the war would drag on for decades. Unless, of course, she herself were to end it. And surely her chances of conquering the Vault of the Drow would increase tenfold if she returned as a god. This, she decided, must be why the Spider Queen sent the House of Kilsek to this remote part of Oerth. The Kilsek need to be here to win godhood for Venrit and ensure victory over their traitorous kin. Venrit did not start the Godwar, but she intends to finish it.

Kilsek Prestige Classes

Two Kilsek prestige classes are presented here for the first time. Although these classes are built to reflect the unique circumstances of the House of Kilsek, they could be used easily in most campaigns.

Bloodsister

In the Vault of the Drow there is a society of female fighters. While each noble house maintained its own sorority, the society as a whole is an instrument of the clerical hierarchy. When House Kilsek chose exile over annihilation, the Kilsek sorority remained loyal to their house. Like the rest of

BLOODSISTER ADVANCEMENT

HIT DIE D10

Levels	Base Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+1	+0	+2	+0	Combat reload
2nd	+2	+0	+3	+0	Poison use
3rd	+3	+1	+3	+1	Two-weapon style
4th	+4	+1	+4	+1	Tunnel fighting
5th	+5	+1	+4	+1	Improved-two-weapon style
6th	+6	+2	+5	+2	Throw sword
7th	+7	+2	+5	+2	Sneak attack +1d6
8th	+8	+2	+6	+2	Mind of steel
9th	+9	+3	+6	+3	Twist the knife
10th	+10	+3	+7	+3	Sneak attack +2d6

their kin, they marched out of the Vault of the Drow with heads held high.

Since then the society restructured itself to meet the needs of its new situation. They have become Venrit's elite warriors, fanatical servants of House Kilsek and the Spider Queen. Each has sworn a blood oath to Venrit, a fact reflected in the society's new name: the Bloodsisters.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the bloodsister prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A Bloodsister is proficient with all simple and martial weapons, and light and medium armor.

Combat Reload (Ex): At 1st level, a bloodsister learns to use her hand crossbow with amazing speed. She can load a hand crossbow as a free action, which allows her to take the full attack action with the hand crossbow. Furthermore, such is her deftness with this maneuver that the loading action does not provoke an attack of opportunity.

Poison Use (Ex): By 2nd level, a bloodsister masters the use of poison with her weapons. She never runs the risk of accidentally poisoning herself when applying poison to a weapon.

Two-Weapon Style (Ex): The favored melee weapons of the bloodsisters are the short sword and dagger. While so armed and two-weapon fighting, a bloodsister of 3rd level or higher gains a +1 competence bonus to all her melee attacks.

Tunnel Fighting (Ex): Bloodsisters are trained to fight underground in confined spaces. They know how to close with enemies quickly and get their blades up close and personal. When charging an opponent, a bloodsister of 4th level or higher does not provoke attacks of opportunity from that creature by moving through the squares it threatens.

Improved Two-Weapon Style (Ex): Starting at 7th level, a bloodsister fighting with both a short sword and a dagger receives a +1 competence bonus to all her melee damage.

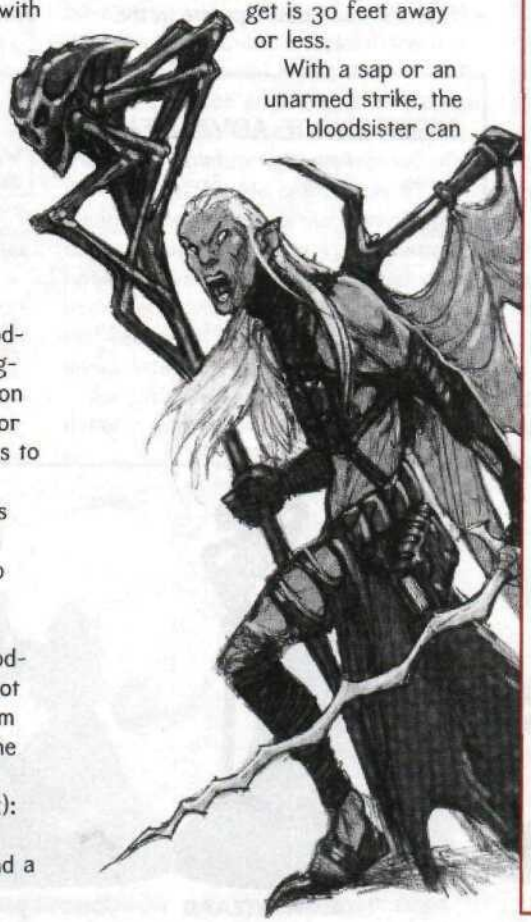
Throw Sword (Ex): When in desperate straights, bloodsisters throw their swords like daggers. A bloodsister of 6th level or higher can throw short swords without penalty, with a range increment of 10 feet.

Sneak Attack (Ex): Bloodsisters see no reason to fight fair. They gang up on opponents whenever possible and often fight in teams. At 7th level, a bloodsister gains the ability to sneak attack foes. Any time the bloodsister's target would be denied his Dexterity bonus to AC (whether he actually has a Dexterity bonus or not), the bloodsister's attack deals +1d6 points of damage. The extra damage increases to +2d6 at 10th level. Should the bloodsister score a critical hit with a sneak attack, her extra damage is not multiplied.

It takes precision and penetration to hit a vital spot, so ranged attacks can only count as sneak attacks if the target is 30 feet away or less.

With a sap or an unarmed strike, the bloodsister can make a sneak attack that deals subdual damage instead of normal damage. She cannot use a weapon that deals normal damage to deal subdual damage in a sneak attack, not even with the usual -4 penalty, because she must make optimal use of her weapon in order to execute the sneak attack.

A bloodsister can only sneak attack living creatures with discernible anatomies—undead, constructs, oozes, plants, and incorporeal creatures lack vital areas to attack. Additionally, any creature immune to critical hits is similarly immune to sneak attacks. Also, the bloodsister must be able to see the target well enough to pick out a vital spot



For Your Campaign

This article uses the Sundered Realm, a portion of the Greyhawk world and the setting of the *Chainmail* game, as its basis, but there's no reason why it couldn't be used as a resource for other settings or a campaign world of your design, even if you don't use drow. Here are a few examples of what you could do to make the material in this article suited to your style of play:

- DMs running campaigns in the *Greyhawk* setting should have an easy time incorporating House Kilsek into their game. Perhaps the house never suffered exile from the legendary Vault of the Drow and now assists other dark elves in the Lost Lands by offering secret support to the giant armies infesting the Duchy of Geoff.
- If you use the Forgotten Realms setting, consider using some of the history and the prestige classes presented here as a version of what occurred to Drizzt Do'Urden's house. Perhaps some member escaped and founded a city beneath the war-torn lands of Tethyr.
- The history and prestige classes presented here could be adapted for dwarves. Perhaps a clan of belligerent dwarves was driven from its holdings after a council of elders determined that the clan should be held responsible for starting a civil war. Driven to desperation in the wilds of the Underdark, the clan took a ruined gith city as its own and allied itself with kuo-toa.

For suggestions on how you can use the prestige classes presented in this article, see the For Your Character sidebar.

and must be able to reach a vital spot. The bloodsister cannot sneak attack while striking at a creature with concealment or by striking the limbs of a creature whose vitals are beyond reach.

If a bloodsister gets a sneak attack bonus from another source (such as rogue levels), the bonuses to damage stack.

Mind of Steel (Ex): Priestesses of Lolth instruct the best of the bloodsisters in mental techniques useful in warding off hostile magic. Starting at 8th level, a bloodsister gains a +4 resistance bonus against mind-affecting spells.

Twist the Knife (Ex): A bloodsister learns to inflict maximum pain and damage with her weapons. The critical multipliers of the short sword and dagger are increased to x3 when wielded by a bloodsister of 9th or higher level.

NIGHTSHADE
Class Requirements

To qualify to become a nightshade, a character must fulfill all the following criteria:

Race: Drow.

Alignment: Any evil.

Move Silently: 7 ranks.

Feats: Point Blank Shot.

Special: Must be able to cast arcane spells.

Every nightshade must survive the Spider Queen's challenge. Four monstrous spiders bite the candidate's limbs as other nightshades hold him down. If the venom doesn't kill him, he can join the nightshades.

NIGHTSHADE
Class Skills

The nightshade's class skills (and the key abilities for each) are:

Str: –

Dex: Disable Device, Escape Artist, Hide, Move Silently, Open Lock, Pick Pockets, Tumble.

Con: –

Int: Decipher Script (exclusive skill), Read Lips (exclusive skill), Search.

Wis: Innuendo, Listen, Sense Motive, Spot.

Cha: Bluff, Disguise, Gather Information, Intimidate, Use Magical Device (exclusive skill).

Skill Points at Each Level: 6 + Int modifier.

Nightshade

Once Venrit decided to enter the Godwar, she knew she would need intelligence about her new foes. Getting information about the dwarves and gnolls was easy enough, but the factions that made their homes aboveground posed a few difficulties. What Venrit needed was a group of skilled infiltrators who could operate in the bright sunlight of the surface world. Each must be a master of disguise and stealth, and a friend of the shadows.

It was the sorceress Ildred who gave Venrit the instrument she craved. Ildred perfected the lost art of "arachthel," a path of stealth that relied on powers granted from the venom of spiders. The only problem: The spider venom killed as often as not. Venrit was willing to pay the price, and so the Nightshades were born. This secretive group spies on the surface nations, gathering information, spreading panic and fear, and bringing the silent blade to Kilsek's foes.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the nightshade prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Nightshades are proficient with all simple weapons, as well as the sap, rapier, and short bow. Nightshades are proficient with light armor but not with shields.

HIT DIE D8

NIGHTSHADE ADVANCEMENT

Levels	Base Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+0	+0	+2	+0	Light adjusted, web walker
2nd	+1	+0	+3	+0	Wall runner
3rd	+2	+1	+3	+1	Sneak attack +1d6
4th	+3	+1	+4	+1	*Change self* 3/day
5th	+3	+1	+4	+1	Poison immunity
6th	+4	+2	+5	+2	Sneak attack +2d6
7th	+5	+2	+5	+2	Poison spittle
8th	+6	+2	+6	+2	*Web* 3/day
9th	+6	+3	+6	+3	Sneak attack +3d6
10th	+7	+3	+7	+3	Shadow walk 1/day

MINATURES PAINTED BY

DISPLACER BEAST

KUO-TOA

DROW WIZARD

DROW WARRIOR

DROW WARRIOR

For Your Character

The prestige classes presented in this article need not be for drow alone or even for evil characters. If one of them interests you, check with your DM and see if it can be altered and incorporated into her game and your character. In general, keeping the mechanics the same but changing the name or description gives you a great deal of flexibility. Here are a few suggestions:

The bloodsister prestige class could be a guild for a group of rangers and wilderness protectors who specialize in removing threats to natural areas. They use special sleep poisons to knock out most foes, but repeat offenders have little hope of escaping the bite of their two blades.

The nightshades could be a prestige class for an order of monks who hold the qualities of a spider in high esteem. They practice the "spider's shadow style" of marital arts, and its masters take levels of the nightshade prestige class.

Both of the prestige classes could represent special groups from another race. Dwarves might call such groups the hammer matrons and the cavern raiders, gnomes might call them knife maidens and web runners, and other races could create similar names.

Light Adjusted (Ex): Nightshades are specially trained to operate above ground, and this includes a brutal regimen to forcibly adjust their eyes to bright light. A nightshade does not suffer from light blindness as other drow do.

Web Walker (Ex): A nightshade can move through webs (both natural and those of the *web* spell) without hindrance.

Wall Runner (Su): Nightshades learn to harness the spider blood in their veins as time goes by. Starting at 2nd level, a nightshade can walk on walls and ceilings as if wearing *slippers of spider climbing*. At 5th level, a nightshade's speed when wall running increases to 30 ft.

Sneak Attack (Ex): At 3rd level, a nightshade gains a +1d6 sneak attack. Any time the nightshade's target would be denied her Dexterity bonus to AC (whether she actually has a Dexterity bonus or not), the nightshade's attack deals +1d6 points of damage. The extra damage increases to +2d6 at 6th level and +3d6 at 9th level. Should the nightshade score a critical hit with a sneak attack, his extra damage is not multiplied.

It takes precision and penetration to hit a vital spot, so ranged attacks can only count as sneak attacks if the target is 30 feet away or less.

With a sap or an unarmed strike, the nightshade can make a sneak attack that deals subdual damage instead of normal damage. He cannot use a weapon that deals normal damage to deal subdual damage in a sneak attack, not even with the usual -4 penalty, because he must make optimal use of his weapon in order to execute the sneak attack.

A nightshade can only sneak attack living creatures with discernible anatomies—undead, constructs, oozes, plants, and incorporeal creatures lack vital areas to attack. Additionally, any creature immune to critical hits is similarly immune to sneak attacks. Also, the nightshade must be able to see the target well enough to pick out a vital spot and must be able to reach a vital spot. The nightshade cannot sneak attack while striking at a creature with concealment or by striking the limbs of a creature whose vitals are beyond reach.

If a nightshade gets a sneak attack bonus from another source (such as rogue levels), the bonuses to damage stack.

Change Self (Sp): At 4th level, a nightshade can cast the *change self* spell three times per day, with a caster level equal to his character level.

Poison immunity (Ex): At 5th level, a nightshade becomes immune to poison of all types.

Poison Spittle (Ex): At 7th level, a nightshade can secrete poison-like saliva (injury, DC 14; 1d4 Strength initial and secondary damage). A nightshade can coat a bladed weapon with this poison spittle as a move-equivalent action.

Web (Sp): At 8th level, a nightshade can cast the *web* spell three times per day at a caster level equal to his character level.

Shadow Walk (Sp): At 10th level, a nightshade can cast the *shadow walk* spell once per day at a caster level equal to his character level.

DRIDER TROOPER

DROW WARRIOR

DROW SOLDIER

DROW RANGER

DROW ARCHER

DM's toolbox

Preparing to Improvise

by Johnn Four

Send your tips by email to:
scalemail@wizards.com
see also:
www.roleplayingtips.com

Improvisation is one of the Holy Grails of DMing. When things click, amazing, heroic adventures seem to come create themselves, and the glowing feeling you get after the game session is unbeatable. Improvisation is also many DMs' greatest fear, ranking somewhere between death, taxes, and public speaking.

If your palms get sweaty at the thought of running a game completely on the fly, then read on. As you will learn, the trick is in a little pre-game preparation—that's right, you can (and should) *prepare* to improvise!

First off, a word of encouragement. You can improvise; you've got the skills right now, in fact. Even if you use published adventures, you already make hundreds of decisions and conjure up a plethora of new details during every game session. It's the nature of the DM's job, and if that job is yours, then congratulations, you have what it takes to improvise.

Another point to ponder: Every Dungeon Master has strengths and weaknesses. Some are natural storytellers but get bamboozled by the volume of numbers during an intense combat. Others are so organized that they can tell you the population and class break-down of every village in the land with a single keystroke, but they stumble when it comes to vivid descriptions and plotting. Most of us are somewhere in between, so I encourage you to take a moment and make a list of your weaknesses, because that little bit of self awareness might be all you need to make sure an improvised session runs smoothly.

Organization & Sessions

While a very small number of DMs can show up without books, dice, or notes and then provide an evening of great entertainment, most of us can't do that, so cheat a bit and prepare to improvise by devising a few tools for in-game use. See the sidebar for a list of resource possibilities.

You also need to prepare for note-taking during sessions. A major pitfall of improvisation is campaign consistency. You don't want NPC names to change mid-game, past game events to be mis-remembered, or good ideas to slip away. Prepare to keep campaign notes, or have a detail-oriented player do it for you.

Weaving Stories & Adventures

Running without a pre-planned storyline helps make your adventures adaptable to the group's mood, the changing needs of the characters, and unexpected choices from the players. It gives everyone more freedom, and it can make your sessions more enjoyable. It might also be a DM's greatest worry: How do you tell an exciting story that doesn't play like a bunch of disjointed wandering monster encounters?

Although you won't be using a pre-planned plot, there are some fast preparation tricks to help you run smooth, well-connected adventures.

Outline a few major campaign events and villains. Your game world shouldn't be static, nor should it revolve solely around the PCs. This is difficult to do while making things up as you go, because it's often a struggle just reacting to the PCs' actions and keeping one step ahead. Having a short list of the *significant current events and villains* who are stirring things up in your world helps you keep the big picture in mind and allows you to add the details that bring campaigns to life.

More importantly, this list can inspire you to tie events together as you go, potentially turning a series of improvisations into a cohesive story. If you know the basic causes of the world's conflicts, you can provide a series of

Improvisation Tools

1. Charts and tables from the core rulebooks
2. Custom charts and tables.
3. Articles and ideas grabbed from *Dragon* and *Dungeon* magazines
4. Print-outs from the Internet
5. Bits and pieces from your old modules
6. Copies of the players' character sheets
7. Computer software
8. Services at websites
9. Television, movies, and fiction
10. Binder, computer, notebook, or box to organize your notes and game materials

A quick tip about the last point: It's almost impossible to run sessions using index cards, stickies, a laptop, photocopies, and notebooks all at the same time. Try to stick to just one organization method: laptop, binder, notebook, or index cards. Regardless of your choice, the point is to get to your improvisation tools quickly and seamlessly during play.

improvised adventures that lead to this fundamental conflict, providing long-term goals for the players, continuity for the campaign, and seeds for specific improvised sessions through one technique.

Make an encounter ideas list. Encourage the characters to have desires and goals, and use these for encounter, story, and quest ideas. Study your players, and learn what they enjoy most about roleplaying. Reflect on the past, and think about the encounters that the group enjoyed the most. Take a look at the Encounter Ideas Record Sheet at the end of this article. The five-column worksheet provides an easy way to generate encounter ideas that have personal connections to one or more of the players. Take two minutes and brainstorm a few ideas before a session gets started, and add to the sheet as an adventure proceeds. At the end of a session, jot down any ideas that came out of that session. Be sure to cross out the hooks you use and refresh the sheet with new ideas every so often.

Ponder the possibilities. If you had your entire campaign world and all of its dungeons memorized, improvising would be a snap. In lieu of that, as you're watching commercials or standing in line, think about the campaign possibilities of your next session. Picture the places the PCs could go, the people they could meet, and the entertaining things that could happen. You'll be amazed at how often you dip into this idea pool once you're at the table, and how helpful it is to have developed such a pool in the first place.

Create filler encounters. Prepare some simple encounters that can be dropped in anywhere, at any time, in case you get stuck. A wandering monster table might work, but you might feel more confident having a couple of fleshed-out dungeon, wilderness, and village/city encounters on hand for emergencies.

Another trick for great improvised encounters is to flip through the back of your *Monster Manual* where creatures are indexed by CR, or open the *Dungeon Master's Guide* to the encounter tables in Chapter 4: Adventures. Pick a few creatures in the appropriate CR range, and read up on them so that you can weave them into your game as needed. *Dungeon Magazine's* new "Critical Threats" feature makes another great resource because it provides pre-planned encounters, allowing you to focus on improvising description and continuity between encounters.

Keep a number of short adventures on hand. Short adventures are quick to prepare, and they can give a session a quick pick-up should it start to stall. (See the last two issues for more advice on avoiding stalls.) There are a number of mini-modules available on the market, and there are many websites and magazines, including **www.wizards.com** and *Dungeon Magazine,* that feature short adventures and encounters.

Read or write fiction, and watch great movies and shows. Reading and writing are excellent ways to create a pool of neat ideas to draw from while DMing. Watching a good movie or TV show the night before a session can also inspire your stories.

Create a list of plot hooks and story ideas. Create a sheet with one-line plot ideas to stoke your creativity during a session. If the characters aren't taking the lead, or if you can't think of what to do next, pick a plot hook and run with it. This is also a great tool for side-plot generation.

NPCs

NPCs are the bread and butter of many campaigns, yet they are often difficult to create on the fly. You can fall into a rut where all your NPCs seem similar to one another or you forget important details like names and personalities. Statistics are also critical when combat erupts or opposed skill checks are required. Fortunately, there are several pre-game preparation options available to help you improvise NPCs.

Create name lists. Use campaign source books, name books, online random name generators, and dictionaries to build a cheat sheet with male, female, town, and racial names.

Five Improv Organization Tips

1. Number the pages in your binder and create a table of contents for your cheat sheets and charts.
2. Buy a cheap cardboard or plastic magazine file; keep your best resource books together in there for easy access when planning or DMing.
3. Bookmark useful websites and organize them under a single folder called D&D Tools with subfolders for NPCs and such.
4. Sprinkle labeled stickies and bookmarks liberally through your reference books.
5. Spend time becoming familiar with any software you plan on using before the game.

Create personality lists. On your name cheat sheet, also come up with a bunch of one-line NPC personalities that you can instantly apply to a new NPC during the game. Look no further than your *Dungeon Master's Guide* for this. The One Hundred Traits chart in Chapter 5: Campaigns is the perfect tool. You can also draw inspiration from books, movies, and online sources for quirks, behaviors, and mannerisms.

Grab pre-fabricated NPCs. Feel free

Maps, Maps, Maps

10 Types of Maps to Keep Handy:

1. Wilderness
2. Caverns
3. Dungeons
4. Villages
5. Cities
6. Ruins
7. Interiors of common buildings (taverns, inns, temples, and so on)
8. Castles and Forts
9. Large Vehicles (large ships, blimps, and so on)
10. Unusual Environments (cloud castles, underwater terrain, and so on)

5 Sources Of Maps:

1. *Dungeon Magazine*
2. Old modules
3. *Dragon Magazine*
4. Old campaign maps
5. **www.wizards.com** (Check out the Map-A-Week feature and the *Dungeon Magazine* site.)

to use pre-made NPCs during the game to save you time and supply those much-needed statistics. Your job before the game is to check your sources and get things ready for handy access at the table.

Generate, print out, photocopy, or transcribe NPCs from any source you can find. Here's a list to get you started:

- Modules and supplements
- The *Dungeon Master's Guide*, pages 48-58
- **www.wizards.com**
- The Character Generator disk from the *Player's Handbook*
- Jamis Buck's Generators at **http://www.enworld.org/generators/**
- *Dragon Magazine*
- *Dungeon Magazine*
- PC Gen Software at **http://pcgen.sourceforge.net/**
- Old campaign notes
- Other DMs via email and websites

Maps

Nothing beats a map for inspiring and guiding improvised sessions. It's much easier to create interesting encounters with a pre-made map than it is to work from a blank sheet of paper. Maps also create basic campaign logs and help play consistency.

Go to your sources and bookmark or copy a bunch of maps for use during the game. Discard labels and other names, or employ the whole thing as-is.

Treasure

Arbitrary rewards and those created with a few dice rolls before the players' eyes can suck the mystery and wonder right out of your campaign. This is especially true after important battles or for hoards found in special places. The solution is to prepare a treasure cheat sheet. Think up a few things for each category, number them, and give players these numbers as they discover the goodies to help with tracking. The fact that you are carefully tracking treasure only makes such treasure feel more special to the PCs. Be sure to refresh the sheet as the characters gain levels as well.

Although it might seem strange, you can prepare to improvise by shoring up any of your weaknesses, such as thinking up names or fleshing out NPCs on the spot. Before the game, create a few cheat sheets, hints charts, and idea lists to help when you're stuck. Being organized and knowing what your players and characters want goes a long way too! This preparation requires only a small amount of time (15 minutes or so), and it pays real dividends in verisimilitude, continuity, and speed of play.

Treasure

Items to include on a treasure cheat sheet:

1. Gems and jewelry
2. Things found in pockets
3. Works of art and items of superior craftsmanship
4. Disposable magic items such as potions and scrolls
5. Permanent and powerful magic items

It's a good idea to mention a few words about the condition, container, appearance, or ornamentation of each item. Pre-planned details like these can pay off while improvising.

Encounter Ideas Worksheet

	PLAYER NAME	CHARACTER NAME	PLAYER HOOKS	PC GOALS	ENCOUNTER IDEAS
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					

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the Play's the thing

Trouble at the Table

by Robin D. Laws

DM: *So, you wanted to mention something about how the game's been going? . . .*

Oh, but wait. First, I wanted to tell you all that I left my notes from last session on the bus, and I didn't like how easily you got out of the Tunnel of the Minotaur, so everything that happened last session is a dream sequence, and you need to give all your experience points back. Now, there was a point you wanted to make?

Last time, we began a series showing players how to use real-world negotiating techniques to rescue campaigns from impending doom. We showed you how to handle problems with the DM or other players by following these steps:

1. Identify the problem.
2. Identify the problem's causes.
3. Figure out, and learn to respect, the other person's point of view.
4. Solve the other problem person's another way.
5. Present the problem, with a pos sible solution.
6. Be prepared to compromise.

This month, we're going to focus on step one.

Because the people who make up every play group are different, no two problems are exactly alike—but if things are going wrong and you can't quite say why, check the following list of common dilemmas to see if they ring any bells.

Expectation Gaps

We all have different tastes as to what makes the best game session. This is by far the most common problem bedeviling roleplaying groups. You can sum it up as "I'd like slightly less X in the game and slightly more Y."

Your DM might be tailoring the game to her own tastes. She might not have thought to balance its content to the tastes of her players, might not be interested in doing so, or might want to without knowing quite how.

Maybe the DM is already pitching her sessions to the general tastes of her group; it's just that your tastes are out of sync with everyone else's.

Favoritism

Some DMs, especially in beginning groups, tend to favor a player with whom they already have a close friendship. Often this is unconscious. This can be a tough problem to deal with. If you're not careful, you can offend the DM and the beneficiary of her favoritism. You never want to seem like you're questioning or attacking their friendship. Make clear that all you want to do is adjust the effect that it's having on the game.

Your DM might have good intentions in favoring a player. She might be giving a reluctant participant an easier time of it, hoping he'll get hooked on gaming and later become an equal member of the group. Be sensitive to this. However, if it goes on forever, you have a right to object. Again, tread very carefully. Be sympathetic, not confrontational.

When the DM is romantically involved with a player, things can get especially tricky. Depending on how well you know the people involved and how sensitive they are to criticism, you might want to wait to see if the problem solves itself before wading in. You don't want to lose a friendship over a D&D campaign. Then again, the couple might prove to be the very souls of reason once you've brought the matter to their attention. It's a judgment call, and a difficult one at that.

PCs In NPCs' Clothing

DMs can also show favoritism toward their own NPCs. Beware if the DM adds a member to your party, especially if he's one of the DM's own past PCs or strongly resembles one. Your DM is trying to have her cake and eat it, too, being both player and game referee. This problem often requires use of the diplomacy skills we'll be presenting in future installments.

Specialty Trampling

The D&D rules are carefully designed to protect the specialties of the various character classes. If you've devoted several levels worth of skill ranks and feat slots to becoming the group's strongest hitter or sneakiest rogue, you don't want another PC, with other specialties of his own, to come along and outshine you in your chosen area. Unbalanced feats, spells, prestige classes, or magic items, often of the DM's creation, can wreak havoc on the balance of power within a party. Unlike other problems mentioned here, there isn't much of a personal component to this one. The DM probably hasn't considered the problem from your point of view. Ask her to either change the nature of the other PC's ability or item so that it doesn't infringe on your territory, or

request a compensating boon to boost your abilities so you're once again best at what you chose to do.

Spotlight Hogging

If you assemble a small group of people for any reason and set them to talking, some inevitably take a greater part in the discussion than others. A person can attract an unequal share of attention through wit, innate charisma, mastery of the subject matter, or through simple nonstop talking.

Dominating personalities get more than their share of attention at the gaming table, too. If a player is grabbing more than his share of the DM's attention, no matter what the means, you're absolutely within your rights to try to take some of that territory back. Your DM might be unaware of the problem or the extent to which it's bothering you. In this case, pointing out the problem is only half the battle. You and your DM will have to keep reminding the hog to cool it. Few overbearing individuals, whether charming or obnoxious, are able to turn it on and off like a light switch. Their habits are just as ingrained as the shy person who instinctively heads for the corner in unfamiliar situations. Once alerted, your DM might be willing to interrupt him or call on others as necessary. In some cases, you might need to step out of character to politely but firmly remind the player that he's getting out of hand. Most dominating personalities—the ones you want to hang out with, anyway—are ruefully aware of their bad habits, and sheepishly back off when you call them on it.

Wrapping Up

Whether your problem is common, and listed above, or unique unto your group, you can always gain by understanding your DM's style and how it affects the choices she makes—which we'll talk about next month.

You: *Hmm, where do I begin?*

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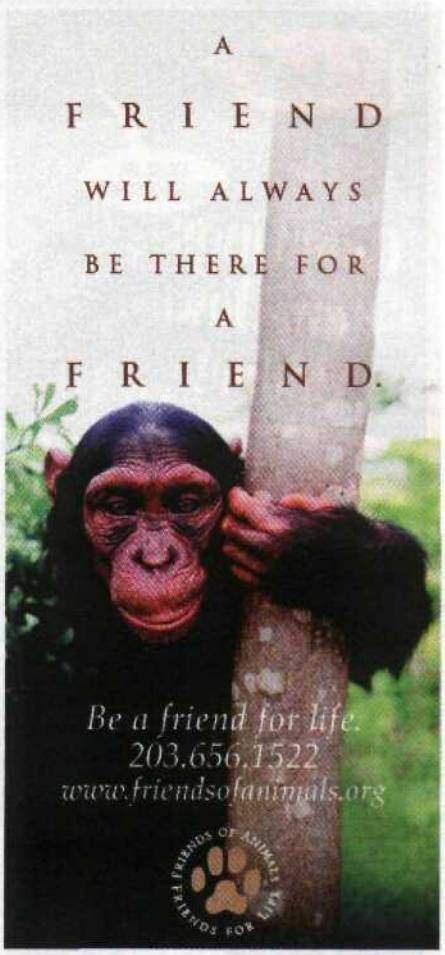

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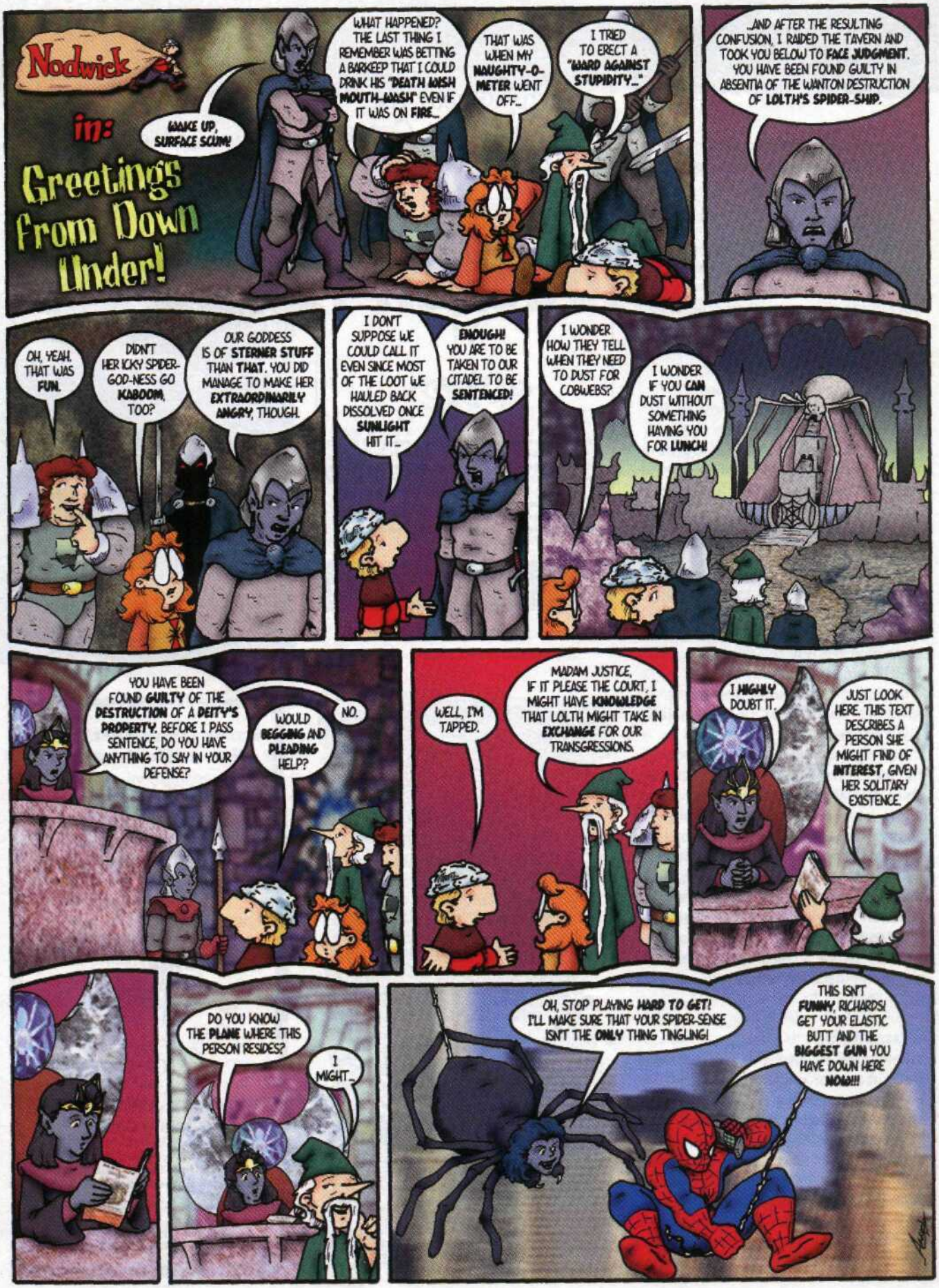
Nodwick
in:
Greetings From Down Under!
WAKE UP, SURFACE SCUM!
WHAT HAPPENED? THE LAST THING I REMEMBER WAS BETTING A BARKEEP THAT I COULD DRINK HIS "DEATH WISH MOUTH-WASH" EVEN IF IT WAS ON FIRE...
THAT WAS WHEN MY NAUGHTY-O-METER WENT OFF...
I TRIED TO ERECT A "WARD AGAINST STUPIDITY..."
...AND AFTER THE RESULTING CONFUSION, I RAIDED THE TAVERN AND TOOK YOU BELOW TO FACE JUDGMENT. YOU HAVE BEEN FOUND GUILTY IN ABSENTIA OF THE WANTON DESTRUCTION OF LOLTH'S SPIDER-SHIP.
OH, YEAH. THAT WAS FUN.
DIDN'T HER ICKY SPIDER-GOD-NESS GO KABOOM, TOO?
OUR GODDESS IS OF STERNER STUFF THAN THAT. YOU DID MANAGE TO MAKE HER EXTRAORDINARILY ANGRY, THOUGH.
I DON'T SUPPOSE WE COULD CALL IT EVEN SINCE MOST OF THE LOOT WE HAULED BACK DISSOLVED ONCE SUNLIGHT HIT IT...
ENOUGH! YOU ARE TO BE TAKEN TO OUR CITADEL TO BE SENTENCED!
I WONDER HOW THEY TELL WHEN THEY NEED TO DUST FOR COBWEBS?
I WONDER IF YOU CAN DUST WITHOUT SOMETHING HAVING YOU FOR LUNCH!
YOU HAVE BEEN FOUND GUILTY OF THE DESTRUCTION OF A DEITY'S PROPERTY. BEFORE I PASS SENTENCE, DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING TO SAY IN YOUR DEFENSE?
NO.
WOULD BEGGING AND PLEADING HELP?
WELL, I'M TAPPED.
MADAM JUSTICE, IF IT PLEASE THE COURT, I MIGHT HAVE KNOWLEDGE THAT LOLTH MIGHT TAKE IN EXCHANGE FOR OUR TRANSGRESSIONS.
I HIGHLY DOUBT IT.
JUST LOOK HERE. THIS TEXT DESCRIBES A PERSON SHE MIGHT FIND OF INTEREST, GIVEN HER SOLITARY EXISTENCE.
DO YOU KNOW THE PLANE WHERE THIS PERSON RESIDES?
I MIGHT...
OH, STOP PLAYING HARD TO GET! I'LL MAKE SURE THAT YOUR SPIDER-SENSE ISN'T THE ONLY THING TINGLING!
THIS ISN'T FUNNY, RICHARDS! GET YOUR ELASTIC BUTT AND THE BIGGEST GUN YOU HAVE DOWN HERE NOW!!!

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Silicon Sorcery

Battle Realms

by Clifford Horowitz

The Dragon controlled the mightiest empire in the world, but then, in a single season, they slipped from empire . . . to clan . . . to nothing at all. The Horde, an unknowable, unbeatable tide of death, swept over the Dragon, laying waste to their finest warriors in a single battle and sending the rest of the clan into retreat for six long months.

Finally, when they reached the sea and could run no more, the master of the clan summoned the spirit of the Dragon itself. Winds shrieked, seas raged, fields rent, and the world was broken. The master of the Dragon clan disappeared into the elemental fury, and the Horde with him. The people were saved.

Although the people survived, the clan could not. The Dragon's greatest warriors were dead, its ruling line consumed, and its few remaining heroes were left divided and fighting against each other. The Dragon died that day, replaced with the Serpent, a wan and corrupt shadow of the Dragon's former greatness.

Such times cry out for heroes and dreamers, and such a cry is answered by Kenji, last of the Dragon clan nobility, and your character in *Battle Realms*, a roleplaying, real-time strategy game that sets the task of restoring the greatness of the Dragon upon your shoulders. As Kenji, you must wander the foreign lands that have become home to the Serpent, reunite with the heroes who served your father, and fight against the enemies of your dying clan. For the hope you bring them, peasants will flock to your banner, harvest rice, gather water, capture wild horses, and build up their towns. Yet the task before you is too great even for the mighty heroes of the Dragon to shoulder alone. You must revive the ancient fighting styles of the Dragon masters and set your peasants to learning them. With this army at your back, you might yet be able to stand against the twisted sorcerers of the Lotus clan, their feral escaped slaves, the Wolf clan, and perhaps even the Horde itself.

What distinguishes *Battle Realms* from other real-time strategy games is what its designers have dubbed "liquid resources." The things you produce and harvest can be used in a multitude of ways. Water is used to nourish troops in training, vital in construction, and the only thing that puts out the flames of a burning building. The horses you capture and domesticate can be given to soldiers to make cavalry, or they can be put in

the fields with the peasants to increase efficiency. The uses for resources far outstrip their availability, forcing you to make tactical decisions for their allocation at every turn.

The setting presented in *Battle Realms* could be the basis of an entire campaign, and many of its elements could find places in your games. Some of the most interesting of these elements are the gems of the Dragon empire: its enlightened fighters. These prestige classes are suitable for any campaign with a little work, but obviously, they are right at home in an *Oriental Adventures* campaign.

Kabuki Warrior

For the Dragon, combat and war are forms of art, not cold disciplines. Warriors of the Dragon clan view combat as an outlet for passion and an opportunity for expression. None embody this philosophy better than the kabuki warriors. These soldiers are equal parts fighter and entertainer. In times of peace they use their talents to amuse those around them with feats of acrobatics, sleight of hand, illusions, and stories. These skills are not wasted when conflict arises. Dressed in garish costumes with wild hair and even wilder face paint, kabuki warriors take the field of battle with a smile on their faces and a quip on their tongues, often juggling items in one hand as they leap and slash at their opponents.

The kabuki warrior melds martial skill and theatrics into a dazzling, confusing display that tricks opponents into making mistakes—errors the kabuki warrior is quick to exploit with vicious brutality. Many fear the humiliation that they could suffer in fighting these warriors more than they fear the injuries they risk.

The eclectic requirements of the kabuki warrior code and fighting style requires a broad knowledge of combat, magic, and acrobatics. Most kabuki warriors are bards or multiclassed bard/fighters. Some multiclassed sorcerer/rogues join the order, and monk/illusionists are fairly common. Single-classed kabuki warriors are rare and usually come from the wizard class.

Class Features

All of the following are features of the kabuki warrior prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: The kabuki warrior is proficient in all martial weapons, but no armor or shields.

Canny Defense (Ex): When wearing no armor or shield, the kabuki warrior adds his Intelligence bonus to his Armor Class. Should the kabuki warrior lose his Dexterity bonus, he loses this bonus as well.

Clowning (Ex): As a master of performing arts, the kabuki warrior gains a +2 competence bonus to his Bluff, Perform, and Tumble checks.

Sneak Attack: At 2nd level, a kabuki warrior gains the ability to sneak attack foes (see the Rogue section in Chapter 3 of the *Player's Handbook*). He gains +1d6 damage at 2nd level, and an additional 1d6 every three levels thereafter. If a kabuki warrior gets a sneak attack bonus from another source (such as rogue levels), the bonuses to damage stack.

Taunt (Su): With a combination of cutting jibes and frustrating defense, the kabuki warrior can enrage his opponents, driving them to become wild and sloppy. Once per day at 3rd level, the kabuki warrior can make a Bluff check opposed by a melee opponent's Sense Motive roll. If the kabuki warrior succeeds, the opponent falls victim to her own temper and suffers a -2 morale penalty to all attack rolls and AC for a number of rounds equal to the kabuki warrior's Charisma bonus +1. Characters with the ability to rage (such as barbarians) who are four levels higher than the kabuki warrior are immune to this ability. At 6th level, the kabuki warrior can

For Your Campaign

The prestige classes from *Battle Realms* fit well into an *Oriental Adventures* campaign, and with a little modification, they can be a part of any campaign world.

- The dragon warriors could be just that: warriors who devote themselves to the service of red dragons. These warriors gain powers as the mystic bond with the dragon they serve grows stronger.
- The kabuki warrior could be a prestige class for a kind of warrior-jester. Perhaps a secret organization of "fools" provides guardians and advisors to the royalty of a nation in your campaign.
- The dragon warrior and kabuki warrior could be two opposing mystic orders: one devoted to the wild expression of feelings; the other devoted to controlling emotion.

KABUKI WARRIOR Class Requirements

To qualify to become a kabuki warrior, a character must fulfill all the following criteria:

Base Attack Bonus: +5 or better.
Bluff: 5 ranks.
Perform: 5 ranks.
Tumble: 3 ranks.
Feats: Dodge, Expertise, Mobility, Spring Attack.
Special: The ability to cast three Illusion spells.

KABUKI WARRIOR Class Skills

The kabuki warrior's class skills (and the key abilities for each) are:

Str: Jump.
Dex: Balance, Escape Artist, Tumble.
Con: Concentration.
Int: Alchemy, Craft (any).
Wis: Sense Motive.
Cha: Bluff, Perform.

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

KABUKI WARRIOR ADVANCEMENT

HIT DIE D10

Levels	Base Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+0	+0	+2	+2	Canny defense, clowning
2nd	+1	+0	+3	+3	Sneak attack +1d6
3rd	+2	+1	+3	+3	Taunt 1/day
4th	+3	+1	+4	+4	*Stardust* 1/day
5th	+3	+1	+4	+4	Sneak attack +2d6, expert clowning
6th	+4	+2	+5	+5	Taunt 2/day
7th	+5	+2	+5	+5	*Stardust* 2/day
8th	+6	+2	+6	+6	Sneak attack +3d6
9th	+6	+3	+6	+6	Taunt 3/day
10th	+7	+3	+7	+7	*Stardust* 3/day, master clowning

taunt twice per day. At 9th level, he can taunt three times per day.

Stardust (Sp): The kabuki warrior can summon shimmering streams of sparkles that dance about him as he twirls and spins. This dazzling display is bright and confusing, blurring the kabuki warrior's form and making it difficult to ascertain his exact position.

This effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to the kabuki warrior's Charisma bonus +1. During this time, he gains a circumstance bonus to his Armor Class equal to his Charisma bonus +1. At 7th level the kabuki warrior can perform this ability twice per day, and at 10th level he can perform it three times per day.

Creatures who cannot see the lights are not distracted by them.

Expert Clowning (Ex): At 5th level, the kabuki warrior's mastery of performance and understanding of the human reaction has reached the point where he gains a +4 competence bonus to Bluff, Tumble, and Perform checks.

Additionally, he can use the Bluff skill in combat to feint and apply the result to all opponents within 10 feet. Roll once and apply that single result to all applicable targets.

Master Clowning (Ex): By 10th level, the kabuki warrior is a master of showmanship. He can use the Bluff skill to feint in combat as a move-equivalent action, applying the result to all creatures within 10 feet.

Dragon Warrior

The rank and file of the Dragon clan's troops are taken from peasantry, the ancient tradition of warriors coming only from noble stock dead along with the empire. However, masters of the training halls still watch for students with the unmistakable passion that can only mean they've touched the spirit of the Dragon and taken it into their hearts. These exceptional individuals are separated from the others and put through a unique training regimen that relies heavily on meditation and self-mastery. Those who emerge take the field as dragon warriors.

Strange combinations of berserker fury and monk mysticism, dragon warriors are a people apart. They carry within them the seething power of the dragon, and its stormy urges make them somewhat capricious. Yet to contain and truly harness this power requires immense discipline, which reins in their more outlandish urges. While they might seem calm at a distance, with muted body language and soft speech, up close their voices betray hints of strain, and their small movements tremble to become more. They appear locked in an eternal, invisible struggle, and indeed, they are. The only time they let go completely is in battle, where they release the Dragon in all its fury, roaring like a storm as their giant swords cut through the opposition in a torrent of steel.

Monks and barbarians who have forsaken their former lives often take up the dragon warrior path for its familiarity. Fighters, rangers, and martially minded clerics are also common.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the dragon warrior prestige class.

Weapons and Armor: Dragon warriors gain no new proficiency with weapons, armors, or shields. Wearing armor inhibits the dragon warrior's connection with the spirit of the Dragon, and a dragon warrior who dons armor loses access to all her dragon warrior class abilities. All such abilities return to the dragon warrior as soon as the armor is removed.

Body of Soul (Su): The dragon warrior's first step in harnessing the power of the Dragon is to quell it completely. Until they come to grips with the roiling rages that now reside in their hearts, those first touched by the Dragon must either quell the spirit or be consumed by it. However, in burying the essence of the Dragon within themselves, the fledgling dragon warriors learn an inner strength so intense that it radiates outward. As a result, dragon warriors add

their Wisdom bonus to their hit points at each dragon warrior level. Wisdom damage or drain, depletes these extra hit points.

Chi Shield (Su): The intense meditation continues, as does the growth of the dragon warrior's power. By this point, the energy of the Dragon has soaked the dragon warrior through with mystical power, imbuing her with supernatural toughness. At 2nd level, the dragon warrior gains a deflection bonus to Armor Class equal to her Wisdom modifier.

At 5th level, the resilience of the warrior increases, and she gains damage reduction 1/—.

At 8th level, the essence of the Dragon has so thoroughly permeated the warrior that her mind and body share the same infallible staying power. The dragon warrior's damage reduction increases to 2/—, and she develops spell resistance equal to 10 + her Wisdom modifier.

Dragon's Fire (Su): At 3rd level, the dragon warrior learns the first outward means of expressing the Dragon's rage. Using her sword as a focus for the power, the warrior learns to make the giant blade more than a metaphorical representation of the Dragon's fiery breath. As a free action, the dragon warrior can, once per day, imbue a greatsword she wields with the flaming magic weapon enhancement (see the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). As long as the weapon is held in her hands, the enhancement lasts for a number of rounds equal to the dragon warrior's level plus her Wisdom modifier. At 6th level, the dragon warrior can use dragon's fire twice per day, and at 9th level, the warrior can use the ability three times per day.

Dragon's Fury (Ex): A 4th-level dragon warrior finally learns the rudiments of letting the Dragon flow through herself. By allowing a bit of the Dragon's essence out of her tightly controlled heart, the dragon warrior can throw herself into a mystically induced rage. This rage lasts a number of rounds equal to the dragon warrior's Wisdom bonus, but in all other respects it is identical to a barbarian's rage ability. While so enraged, the dragon warrior loses her chi shield, as the spiritual energy is shunted from protection to offense. The dragon warrior can use dragon's fury twice per day. If the dragon warrior has rage from some other source, its bonuses do not stack with those provided by the dragon's fury ability.

Dragon's Grip (Ex): At 7th level, the dragon warrior learns to wrap herself in the power of the Dragon. No longer simply inspired by it, she can now totally immerse herself in it. When she uses the dragon's fury ability, she now gains a +6 to her Strength and Constitution and a +3 to all Will saves. This increases the bonus hit points to 3 per character level. In addition, the dragon warrior can use the dragon's fury ability 3 times per day and no longer loses her chi shield abilities while raging.

Dragon's Release (Ex): At the pinnacle of her development, the dragon warrior becomes an avatar of the great Dragon spirit. She no longer channels its power when enraged, but she becomes more like a direct gateway for the primal force to act upon the world.

When the warrior uses the dragon's fury ability, she gains a +8 to both Strength and Constitution and a +4 to Will saves. This increases the bonus hit points to 4 per character level. In addition, she can use the dragon's fury ability 4 times per day.

While her dragon's fury lasts, her sword bursts into supernatural flames, granting the weapon the flaming magic weapon enhancement, as per the dragon's fire ability. If the dragon warrior chooses to use her dragon's fire ability while so enraged, her weapon is treated as though it also has the flaming burst magic weapon enhancement. D

For Your Character

If the prestige classes from *Battle Realms* sound like fun to you, ask your DM if she'll include them in her campaign and allow you to take one or both. Here are some ideas for how your character might use them:

- Your character has always been a screw up. Called clumsy and a clown throughout life, your PC has decided to take those weaknesses and make them into strengths by becoming a kabuki warrior.
- Your character comes from a family cursed with terrible tempers that cause them to lash out and wound those they love. Many relatives have given in to the rage and taken up the barbarian life, but your PC has tried to control it. Your character is always on the verge of disastrous anger, but that struggle has given the PC the powers of the dragon warrior.

DRAGON WARRIOR Class Requirements

To qualify to become a dragon warrior, a character must fulfill all the following criteria:

Alignment: Any nonchaotic, nonlawful. Dragon warriors who become lawful or chaotic, lose all dragon warrior class abilities.

Base Attack Bonus: +6 or better.

Concentration: 3 ranks.

Knowledge (Religion): 3 ranks.

Feats: Iron Will, Toughness, Weapon Focus (greatsword).

DRAGON WARRIOR Class Skills

The dragon warrior's class skills (and the key abilities for each) are:

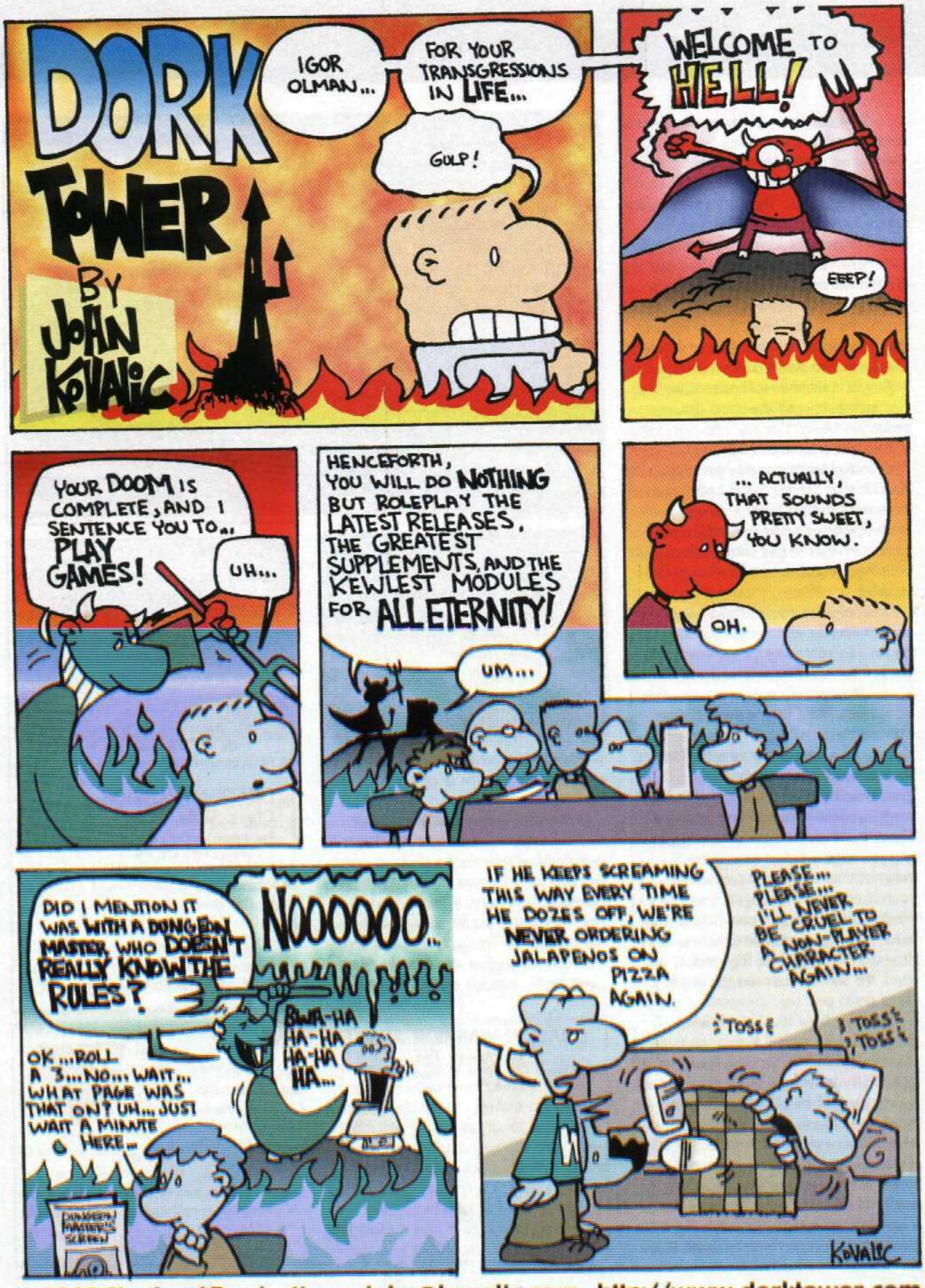
Str: Climb, Jump, Swim.
Dex: Ride.
Con: Concentration.
Int: Knowledge (religion).
Wis: —
Cha: Intimidate.

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

DRAGON WARRIOR ADVANCEMENT

HIT DIE D10

Levels	Base Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+1	+2	+0	+2	Body of soul
2nd	+2	+3	+0	+3	Chi shield (deflection bonus)
3rd	+3	+3	+1	+3	Dragon's fire 1/day
4th	+4	+4	+1	+4	Dragon's fury 2/day
5th	+5	+4	+1	+4	Chi shield (damage reduction 1/—)
6th	+6	+5	+2	+5	Dragon's fire 2/day
7th	+7	+5	+2	+5	Dragon's grip (dragon's fury 3/day)
8th	+8	+6	+2	+6	Chi shield (damage reduction 2/—, spell resistance)
9th	+9	+6	+3	+6	Dragon's fire 3/day
10th	+10	+7	+3	+7	Dragon's release (dragon's fury 4/day)


DORK TOWER
BY JOHN KOVALIC
IGOR OLMAN...
FOR YOUR TRANSGRESSIONS IN LIFE...
GULP!
WELCOME TO HELL!
EEEP!
YOUR DOOM IS COMPLETE, AND I SENTENCE YOU TO.. PLAY GAMES!
UH...
HENCEFORTH, YOU WILL DO NOTHING BUT ROLEPLAY THE LATEST RELEASES, THE GREATEST SUPPLEMENTS, AND THE KEWLEST MODULES FOR ALL ETERNITY!
UM...
... ACTUALLY, THAT SOUNDS PRETTY SWEET, YOU KNOW.
OH.
DID I MENTION IT WAS WITH A DUNGEON MASTER WHO DOESN'T REALLY KNOW THE RULES?
NOOOOOO...
BWA-HA HA-HA HA-HA HA...
OK ...ROLL A 3... NO... WAIT... WHAT PAGE WAS THAT ON? UH... JUST WAIT A MINUTE HERE...
DUNGEON MASTER'S SCREEN
IF HE KEEPS SCREAMING THIS WAY EVERY TIME HE DOZES OFF, WE'RE NEVER ORDERING JALAPENOS ON PIZZA AGAIN.
PLEASE... PLEASE... I'LL NEVER BE CRUEL TO BE NON-PLAYER A CHARACTER AGAIN...
TOSS
TOSS
TOSS
KOVALIC

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Sage Advice
Questions and Answers

by Skip Williams

Email your questions to:
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Join the Sage this month as he continues last month's look at *Masters of the Wild* and moves on to consider a few magical mysteries.

The sidebar on page 31 in *Masters of the Wild* talks about the Craft (herbalism) skill. Is this a new skill, separate from Profession (herbalist)?

It's not exactly new, but it is not the Profession (herbalist) skill. You use the Craft (herbalism) skill to make your own herbal infusions.

My 6th-level ranger wants to advance her 2-Hit-Die wolf. Does she have access to the rules for improving animal companions in Chapter 4 of *Masters of the Wild?* Or are those only for druids.

The material in Chapter 4 applies equally to rangers' animal companions.

If the abilities you gain from gaining a new level let you meet the prerequisites for a feat, can you take that feat right away (provided that you also have an unused feat)? For example, the Blindsight feat from *Masters of the Wild* requires the ability to become a dire bat, which the druid gains at 12th level. Can I take Blindsight with the feat I gain at 12th level, or must I wait until I get my next feat at 15th level?

Yes. When you add a new level, you choose what class level to add before you choose your feat (if a feat is available), see Level Advancement, pages 145-146 in the *Player's Handbook*. Note that because you must choose your class level before choosing skills or feats, you often cannot enter a prestige class the very moment you meet the prerequisites. For example, if you took the Spring Attack feat at 9th level, the soonest you could take a level in a prestige class that has Spring Attack as a prerequisite would be 10th level.

When you use the rage class ability, you become fatigued for as long as you raged. When you use the frenzied berserker's frenzy class ability (from *Masters of the Wild*), you become fatigued for the rest of the encounter, or until you enter a frenzy again, whichever comes first. In either case, both rage and frenzy make you fatigued. Page 84 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* says you become exhausted if you are already fatigued and you become fatigued again. The penalties for exhaustion are pretty steep: You move at 1/2 speed and have a -6 to both Strength and Dexterity. After 1 hour of complete rest you are moved up from exhausted to fatigued. After 8 hours of complete rest you are no longer fatigued. So, after a rage/frenzy combo a frenzied berserker is darn near useless for 9 hours. Better save that for the last battle of the day. What, exactly, is the point of being able to rage multiple times per day if it wipes you out for so long?

A barbarian is only fatigued for the rest of the encounter after raging (a barbarian can rage again while fatigued, but the fatigue penalties stack with the rage bonuses). A frenzied berserker is fatigued for the rest of the encounter after a frenzy, or until entering a new frenzy. In either case, it does not take 8 hours to recover from the fatigue a rage or frenzy causes. Both abilities have specific rules that override the general rule from the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, which is written to cover environmental effects, running, and other cases of prolonged stress on the body not rage and frenzy.

When a barbarian is fatigued for the rest of the encounter after raging, how long is that exactly?

In this case, an "encounter" continues until the DM stops tracking the encounter in combat rounds. That usually happens when the last foe is defeated or escapes or until the last PC is defeated or forced to escape. A creature has escaped from an encounter when its foes decide not to pursue it or until they have no reasonable chance of catching the fleeing creature.

When the *awaken* spell makes an animal a magical beast, do the animal's Hit Dice get any bigger? Does the animal gain any extra skill points, feats, or attack bonuses?

An awakened animal gains no new hit points, bigger Hit Dice, new feats, better saves, or extra skill points, except as noted in the *awaken* spell description. The subject does get the benefit of its extra Hit Dice. If the subject is an animal, it gains +2d8, and it's new base attack is 3/4 of its new total Hit Dice. Its saves improve according to its new Hit Dice total (an animal has good Fortitude and Reflex saves). In addition, an awakened animal's type determines how magic

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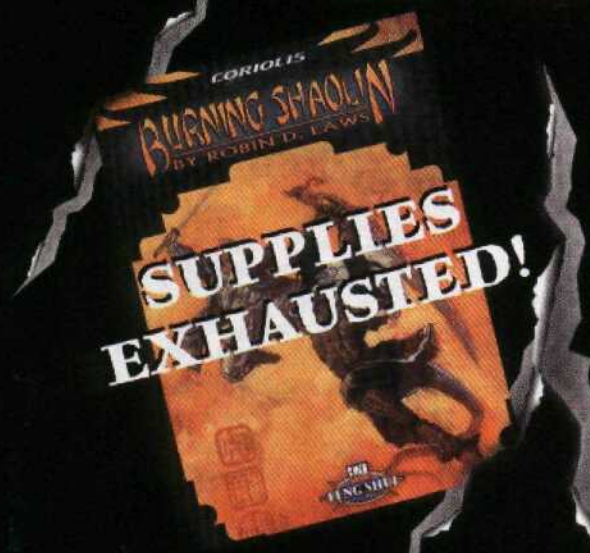

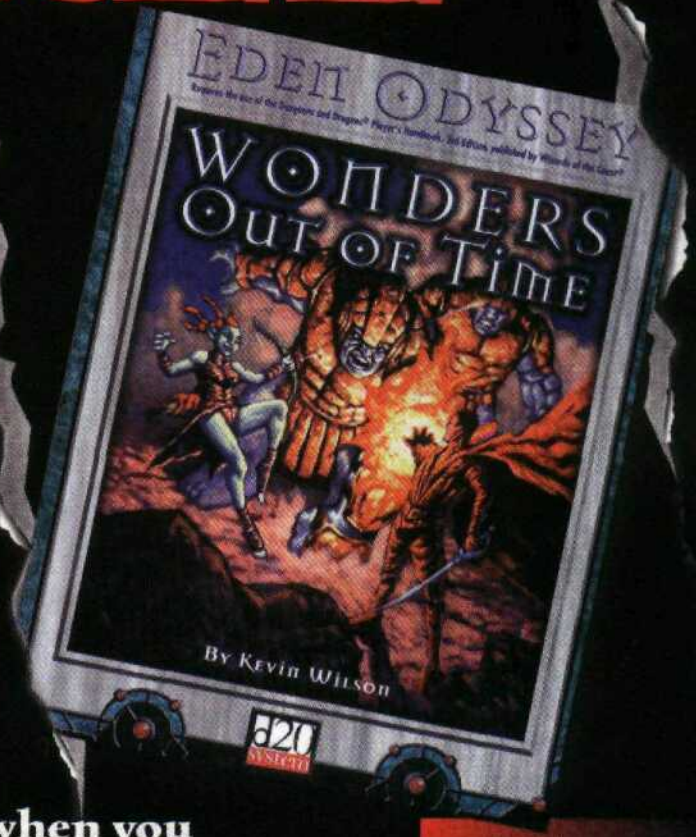

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affects it, just as a familiar or paladin's mount does.

The class skill list for the tamer of beasts includes Handle Animal and Animal Empathy, both of which are much more difficult to use on magical beasts than on animals. When a tamer of beasts's animal companions get smarter and become magical beasts (also a tamer of beasts class feature), these two skills become harder for the character to use. Furthermore, the tamer's empathic link power becomes impossible to use on the companions, since it works like the *speak with animals* spell and thus does not work on the companions anymore. On top of that, magical beasts befriended via the 9th-level magical beast power count as double their Hit Dice for the tamer's quota for companions, so don't all the smarter companions count double? Why do the more intelligent animal companions become magical beasts?

For the same reason that an awakened animal becomes a magical beast. Animals have Intelligence scores of 1 or 2, ergo, no creature with an Intelligence score of 3 or higher can be an animal.

While it is true that a tamer of beasts's smarter animal companions become more difficult to influence through Handle Animal and Animal Empathy, the tamer of beasts will no longer need these skills to interact with those companions. Thanks to the companions' increased Intelligence scores, they understand and respond to the character as readily as most characters do. In fact, because they have Intelligence scores above 3, they actually understand at least one language, usually Common (see page 10 in the *Monster Manual*).

The tamer of beasts's empathic link power works for any of the character's companions, even when those companions are no longer animals. The power's parameters are otherwise like a *speak with animals* spell cast by a character of the tamer of beasts's class level.

Only magical beast's tamed through the 9th-level magical beast mastery power counts double Hit Dice against the tamer of beasts's limit on companions; a creature that becomes a magical beast as the result of becoming a companion to a tamer of beasts does not count double.

The forsaker from *Masters of the Wild* has a damage reduction ability that is based on the destruction of magic items within a 24 hour period. Can you store up magic destruction? Say for instance that my character has damage reduction 7/+3 (so he must destroy 700 gp worth of magic each day to activate the damage reduction). If the character has in his possession a magical item worth 1,400 gp, is he now good for two days when destroying that item?

No, 24 hours is the limit, no matter how much magic you destroy.

What's going on with the bloodhound's pacekeeping power (from *Masters of the Wild*)? Is this supposed to be for shadowing or tracking? For shadowing, it makes sense. For tracking, it doesn't. If I'm an elf, why can't I go faster than the halfling I'm tracking? Pacekeeping implies that my speed, which is normally 30, would be limited to 20 while tracking a halfling.

Pacekeeping allows you to increase your speed. If you're already faster than your mark, you don't have to use the power. Pacekeeping is for tracking, but if you have a mark in sight and want to tail the mark (see *Song and Silence* for rules on tailing someone), a bloodhound can use pacekeeping to keep up, too.

The requirements for the snakelord prestige class in *Masters of the Wild* include the Resist Poison feat, yet the Snakelord gains this as his first totem. Is this an error? Or perhaps there is no error and the bonuses stack to a +8 bonus on Fortitude saves against poison once the Snakelord reaches 2nd level and obtains his first totem?

The Resist Poison prerequisite for the snakelord is correct. The correct first totem power is Clever Wrestling (even if you don't have the Improved Unarmed Strike feat).

When an exotic weapons master (from *Masters of the Wild*) uses her improvised weapon abilities, what size are weapons created by the character? It doesn't say anywhere.

It depends on the size of the object used to make the improvised weapon. In general, an improvised weapon is big enough for the character to use in one or two hands. Note that the character gets 1 1/2 times her Strength bonus to damage when wielding the improvised weapon in two hands. The damage values given in the class description are for weapons made by Medium-sized characters, improvised weapons made by larger or smaller creatures deal damage as listed in the chart below. At 5th level, an exotic weapon master gains the greater improvised weapon ability, and the damage he deals with improvised weapons increases. The increased damage is also listed below.

Character Size	Improvised Weapon Damage*	Greater Weapon Damage*
Fine	1	1d2
Diminutive	1d2	1d4
Tiny	1d3	1d6
Small	1d4	1d8
Medium-size	1d6	2d6
Large	1d8	2d8
Huge	2d6	4d6
Gargantuan	2d8	4d8
Colossal	4d6	8d6

* If the exotic weapon master makes a smaller weapon, use the damage rating for a smaller creature. Larger improvised weapons deal no extra damage.

All characters in the D&D game get to raise an ability score by +1 every four levels (at 4th, 8th, 12th, 16th, and 20th level according to the *Player's Handbook*). Does this stack with the forsaker's +1 ability score bonus at every level of its 10-level progression? Exactly how big is the forsaker's ability bonus? Does the forsaker get +1 to add once at each forsaker level? Or does the forsaker get +1 to add at first level, +2 to add at second level, on up to a whopping +10 at 10th level? If it's the

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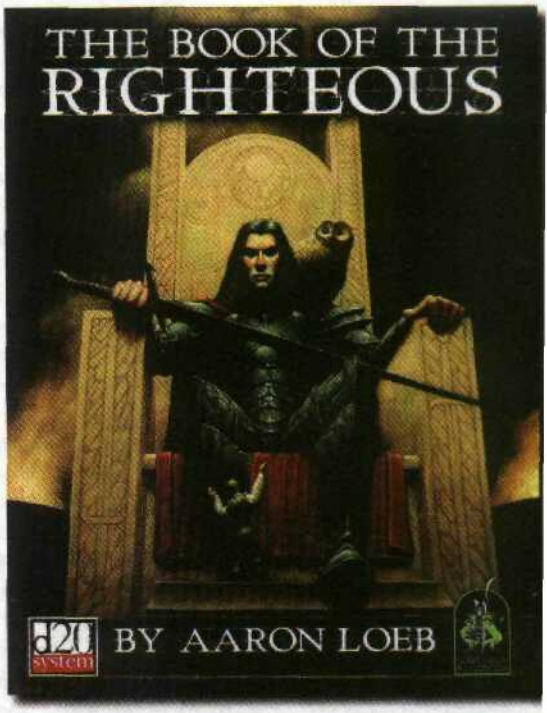

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former, do these bonuses stack with each other?

A forsaker character can improve one ability score for every 4 character levels, just as any other character can. This is not an ability score bonus, the ability just gets bigger (as such, this increase stacks with anything). The forasker's ability bonus is a +1 inherent bonus that the character adds once at each forsaker level. That is +1 at first level, +1 again at 2nd level, and so on.

Inherent bonuses, like all other bonuses in the game, do not stack with each other. In the case of the forsaker, however, the ability bonus class feature allows the forsaker to add either a +1 inherent bonus to an ability score that does not have an inherent bonus already, or to make an existing inherent bonus one point bigger (note that if the character gained an inherent bonus to an ability score from a spell or magic item before becoming a forsaker, that bonus is lost upon becoming a forsaker). No ability score can have an inherent bonus larger than +5, even when the inherent bonus came from the forsaker class ability.

The barbarian gets damage reduction starting at 11th level and then every three levels after that. Does this stack with the damage reduction class feature of the forsaker?

Two or more kinds of damage reduction do not stack. However, a creature with multiple damage reduction qualities gets the benefit of the best one for any given attack against it. For example, an 11th-level barbarian/9th-level forsaker has damage reduction of 1/- and 9/+4. If struck by a weapon with a +3 magical bonus or less, the character gets 9 points of damage reduction. If struck by a weapon with a +4 magical bonus or more, the character still gets 1 point of damage reduction.

Does a character have to be able to cast a spell to meet the shifter's alternate form requirement?

You can meet the requirement with any spell from the list on page 69 of *Masters of the Wild*. You also meet the requirement if you have a spell-like ability or supernatural ability that mimics one of the spells on that list.

Does the Shadow feat from *Masters of the Wild* apply for all Hide and Spot checks, or does it apply only when following someone?

The feat applies to any Hide or Spot check.

Is a spellcaster who is protected by a *spell turning* effect safe from the counterspell action? What effect does the turned portion of a counterspell have on the character who cast the counterspell?

A spellcaster protected by a *spell turning* effect is not entirely safe from counterspells. By definition, a counterspell is targeted on the caster, so a *spell turning* effect can turn the counterspell. If the whole counterspell is turned, the counterspell fails. If the counterspell is only partially turned, there's a chance equal to the unturned portion of the spell that the counterspell works. For example, if you turn 2 levels of a 6th-level counterspell, there's a 4-in-6 chance the counterspell works anyway.

The turned portion of a counterspell has no effect on the caster of the counterspell. A counterspell is altered slightly to create the counterspell effect, and it cannot produce anything but a counterspell effect.

The Reactive Counterspell feat from *Magic of Faerûn* lets you use the counterspell action without a readied action. Does that mean I have to use the delay action instead? If my character takes no action in the round, can he take a counterspell action prior to his original initiative score? What happens to my initiative score if I use a counterspell before it's my turn? Can I use a Reactive Counterspell when I'm flat-footed?

If you have the Reactive Counterspell feat, you can use a counterspell almost anytime. You cannot use Reactive Counterspell when flat-footed. You can use the feat before your turn in the initiative order (when you have not yet acted for the turn) or after your turn (when you have already acted during the turn). In either case, you lose your next action.

The spells *minor globe of invulnerability* and *globe of invulnerability* create a spherical emanation with a 10-foot radius. Does this assume an effect that fills in the whole of the sphere, like a standard spell area, or is it a hollow sphere that prevents spell effects from crossing into it? Is a spellcaster within the globe affected by her own spells?

The effect fills the entire globe. No spell has any effect inside the globe, even spells a character casts on herself. Unlike an *antimagic field*, the globe does not block line of effect. A character can cast spells from inside the globe to the outside, or from outside the globe, through the globe, to another place outside the globe—but never inside the globe. Note that the globe only suppresses spells. If you're in the globe and you cast a spell on yourself, the spell's duration starts running, but there is no effect. If you later leave the globe, the spell takes effect.

What happens when a sorcerer finds an arcane scroll bearing a spell with a caster level lower than the sorcerer would have to be to cast the spell? For example, a sorcerer must be 6th-level to cast a *fireball* spell. What happens if a sorcerer finds a *fireball* scroll that a wizard has scribed at 5th level? Can a sorcerer of 6th-level or higher use the scroll?

Yes, the scroll is an arcane scroll (because a wizard made it) and *fireball* is on the sorcerer class list. The sorcerer must be at least 5th level to use the scroll without a chance for failure. The scroll's caster level determines if there is a chance for failure and the level check DC if there is one; where the spell falls on the scroll user's class spell list is irrelevant.

Is it possible for wizards to cast curative spells? For example, *cure moderate wounds* or *cure light wounds?* It seems that they can under the right circumstances. Suppose Willie, a halfling bard in my party, has the

Scribe Scroll feat. The *Player's Handbook* says wizards, sorcerers, and bards all cast arcane magic. That means the *cure* spells a bard casts are arcane and not divine regardless of what the spell is, right? That also means that if Willie scribes a scroll with *cure light wounds* on it, the scroll will still be an arcane scroll. If that's correct, it means that if my wizard gets the *cure light wounds* scroll from Willie, he can scribe it into his spell book and then prepare it as an arcane spell that he can use time and time again, right?

You can't read a spell off a scroll unless the spell is on your class list (see page 203 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). You also cannot scribe a spell into your book unless its on your class list. Only another bard can use Willie's *cure light wounds* scrolls (because bards are the only arcane casters who have *cure* spells on their class lists).

Remember that spell trigger items, such as wands, do not come in arcane or divine versions. If a bard makes a *wand of cure light wounds*, any character who has *cure light wounds* on his spell list can use the wand.

Some time ago, "Sage Advice" said that multiclass sorcerer/wizards cannot scribe their sorcerer spells into their wizard spell books. What happens if a sorcerer/wizard writes one of her sorcerer spells on a scroll. Can she then write the spell into her spellbook? If so, does the wizard/sorcerer have to go through the extra associated costs and XP expenditure of making an intermediary scroll, which is subsequently destroyed if successfully written to the spellbook?

A wizard can scribe any spell she finds on a scroll into her spellbook, but doing so uses up the scroll. If a sorcerer/wizard makes a scroll of a spell from her sorcerer spell repertoire, she has to pay all the normal cash and experience costs for doing so. Once the scroll is made, however, the character can use the scroll to write the spell into her spellbook, just as she could with any other scroll. The character also must pay the normal costs for writing the spell into the spellbook.

Can undead, which lack metabolisms, use potions, which require ingestion? I believe undead can use magic oils, which are applied externally.

Potions require swallowing, not ingestion. Any corporeal creature can use a potion (see page 191 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*), provided it can swallow. Anything with an intact throat can swallow. Some DMs say skeletal creatures cannot swallow, others say they can. Check with your DM.

Any corporeal creature can use an oil.

POWER PLAY

Ride On

by Stephen Schubert

A 1st-level halfling fighter with a 16 Strength, 20 Dexterity, and 4 ranks in Ride has a minimum Ride check of 10 (+4 ranks, +5 Dexterity), which allows him to always fight when mounted (see the Ride skill, page 72 in the *Player's Handbook*). With the Mounted Combat and Ride-By Attack feats, the little warrior could charge back and forth across the battlefield without risking retaliatory blows, have double his normal movement (the riding dog has a base speed of 40 feet), and attack at a +7 bonus (+1 base, +1 size, +3 Strength, +2 charge). If he uses a light lance as his primary weapon, then he would do double damage as well (2d6+6). At 4th level, with the addition of Spirited Charge, Weapon Focus (light lance), and Weapon Specialization (light lance), the attack bonus rises to +11 (+4 base, +1 size, +3 Strength, +1 Weapon Focus, +2 charge), for damage of 3d6+15 (1d6 lance, +3 Strength, +2 Specialization, tripled due to Spirited Charge).

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PHIL FOGLIO'S WHAT'S NEW WITH PHIL & DIXIE

HE SAYS HE'S VERY SORRY, HE'LL NEVER DO IT AGAIN, AND PLEASE CAN HE HAVE THEM BACK.
SURE- RIGHT AFTER HE GROWS A NECK.
(SNORT) OKAY.
NOW LET'S SEND YOU BACK.
UH-OH
CARTOON BREAK ROOM
OSHA
DON'T FUK
KEVS MUG
HEH! NOW THAT WE'RE FEELING ALL EVIL, LET'S TALK ABOUT SOME OTHER EVIL CREATURES: THE DROW!
THEY ARE PORTRAYED AS A RACE THAT IS TOTALLY, IRREDEEMABLY EVIL. THAT'S RIGHT, NO EXCEPTIONS, EVERY ELF-JACK OF THEM IS EVIL, EVIL, EVIL!!
WHAT'S FOR DINNER?
ROAST BABY!
AHAHAHA! GOD, I HATE YOU.
AND I YOU! RHAAGH!!
KILL THE
THEY ARE ALL IN THE THRALL OF AN EVIL THEOCRACY THAT WORSHIPS GIANT SPIDERS AND ESOTERIC BREAD MOLDS...
HAIL MATRON! WE HAVE CAPTURED A CARAVAN OF NUNS!
JUST IN TIME FOR CHRISTMAS! HAVE THE CHILDREN SHARPEN THEIR FLENSING KNIVES!
um... I ATE THE CHILDREN.
D'OH! ME TOO!
THIS THEOCRACY IS ALSO A MATRIARCY OF THE TYPE ENVISIONED BY THE RECENTLY DIVORCED.
WORTHLESS BUG OF A MALE! AFTER YOU HAVE FED THE SLUGS AND TORTURED THE CHILDREN, I WANT YOU TO DO MY LAUNDRY!!
AiEEE!! THE PAIN!!
NOT FOOD
THIS SIMPLISTIC ASSUMPTION THAT AN ENTIRE RACE IS GOOD OR EVIL IS RIDICULOUS. THE ONLY THING THAT WOULD BE WORSE WOULD BE IF THE DROW HAD SOME OBVIOUS, UNIQUE PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTIC THAT DREW UNFORTUNATE PARALLELS WITH THE REAL WORLD.
LUCKY BREAK, Huh?
SO YOU MIGHT WANT TO THROW IN SOME SOCIOLOGICAL VARIATIONS.
DONE! IN OUR CAVES WE WORSHIP THE BEANIE GOD 'SNUFFLES', AND HAVE A CARING RELATIONSHIP WITH OUR MALES BASED ON LOVE AND MUTUAL RESPECT.
NEAT. AND YOUR CHILDREN?
D'OH!
BONK!
HEY- YOU CAN'T EXPECT MIRACLES OVERNIGHT.

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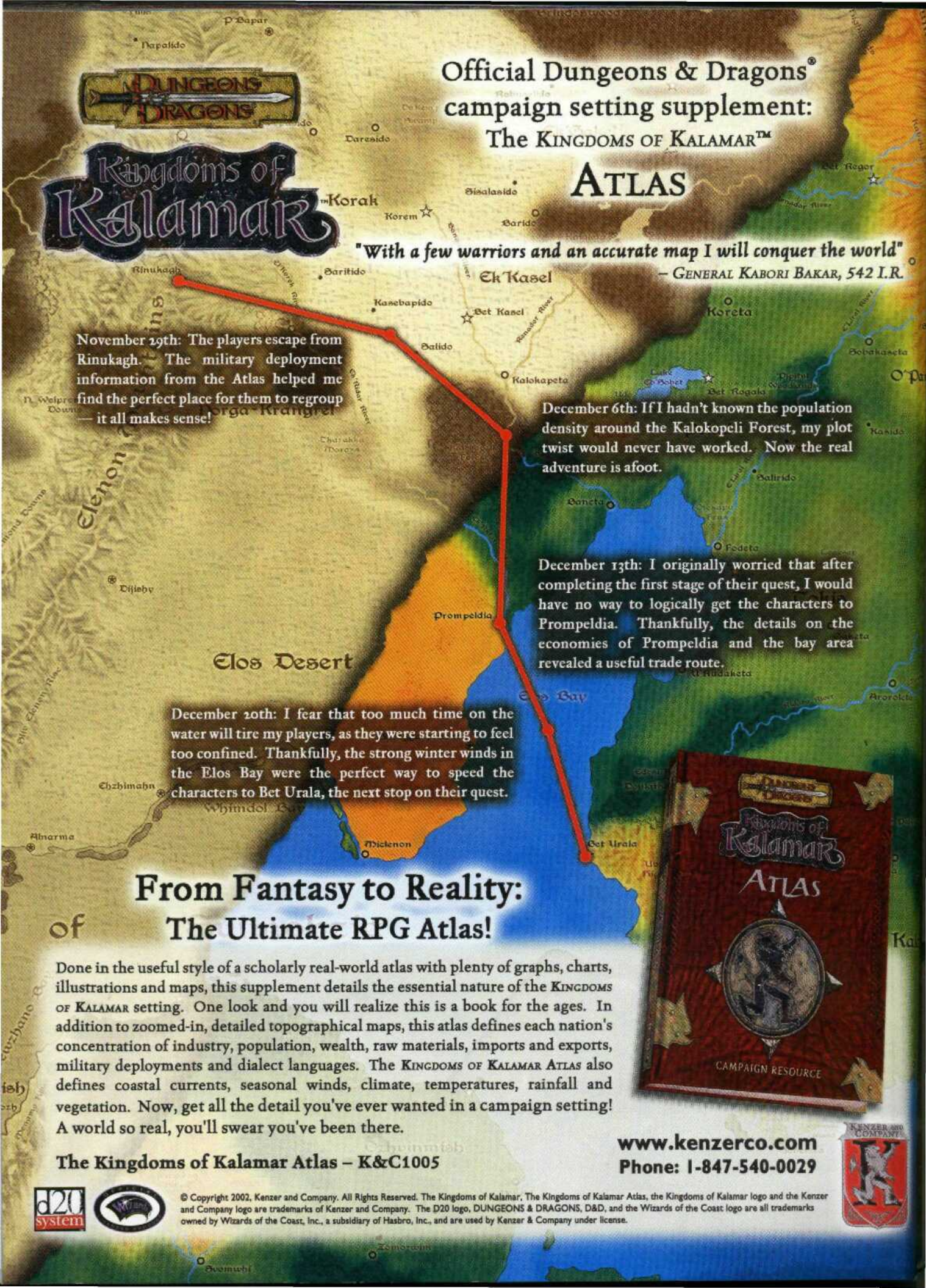
Official Dungeons & Dragons® campaign setting supplement:
The KINGDOMS OF KALAMAR™
ATLAS
"With a few warriors and an accurate map I will conquer the world"
– GENERAL KABORI BAKAR, 542 I.R.
November 29th: The players escape from Rinukagh. The military deployment information from the Atlas helped me find the perfect place for them to regroup — it all makes sense!
December 6th: If I hadn't known the population density around the Kalokopeli Forest, my plot twist would never have worked. Now the real adventure is afoot.
December 13th: I originally worried that after completing the first stage of their quest, I would have no way to logically get the characters to Prompeldia. Thankfully, the details on the economies of Prompeldia and the bay area revealed a useful trade route.
December 20th: I fear that too much time on the water will tire my players, as they were starting to feel too confined. Thankfully, the strong winter winds in the Elos Bay were the perfect way to speed the characters to Bet Urala, the next stop on their quest.
Rinukagh
Saritido
Ek Kasel
Kasebapido
Bet Kasel
Koreta
Salido
Kalokapeta
Bet Regala
Bobakaseta
Kasido
Salirido
Baneta
Fodeta
Prompeldia
Elos Desert
Elos Bay
Arorokia
Dijishy
Ahnarma
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Korak
Korem
Barido
Sisalasido
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P'Bapar
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